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BRUTON SISTERS
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HAMLIN, EDITH
CHAVATH, RUTH B.

VOLUME XVII.

HOWARD FAMILY

VOLUME XVIII.

BETHERS, RAY
POMMER, JULIUS
GAW, WILLIAM
SHERIDAN, JOSEPH M.

VOLUME XIX.

LABAUDT, LUCIEN
OLDFIELD, OTIS
BARNES, MATHEW

VOLUME XX.

PART ONE
YOUNG MODERNS

VOLUME XX.

PART TWO
YOUNG MODERNS

Vol. XVI

MONOGRAPHS

MARGARET BRUTON

ESTHER BRUTON

HELEN BRUTON

HELEN FORBES

EDITH HAMLIN

RUTH BARROWS CRAVATH

Gene Hailey, Editor
Abstract from California Art Research
W.P.A. Project 2874, O.P. 65-3-3632

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGES

BRUTON SISTERS--PREFACE..... 1

MARGARET BRUTON--Early Life..... 3
Influence of the War..... 4
Monterey..... 4
Studies in Paris..... 5
First One-Man Show..... 5

Press Comment..... 5
Joins Beaux Arts Club..... 7
Wins Prize From Society of Women Artists..... 7
Trip to New Mexico..... 8
"Three True Artists"..... 9

Group Exhibition in Los Angeles..... 11
Indian Portraits..... 11
Honors at Exhibits..... 12
Color Tension..... 13
More Three Sister Shows..... 14

Fresco and Tile Murals..... 15
Early Day Tales..... 15
Ghost Towns of Nevada..... 16
Virginia City Scenes Shown in Los Angeles..... 17
Women Again Lead Field in Art Exhibits of the Week--
The Bruton Sisters Paint Gayly..... 18

"Mining Mountain" Wins First Prize..... 18
Progressives of 1934..... 19
"Alameda Sisters Display Oils, Drawings, and Other
Work in San Francisco..... 20
Retrospective Exhibit..... 20
Family Drives Across Continent..... 21

They Travel to Mexico..... 22
Critic Comments on Womens' Place in Art..... 23
"Night Fiesta" by Margaret Bruton is Winner of
First Prize..... 24
Representative Works..... 26
Exhibitions..... 27

Awards..... 28
Clubs..... 29
Bibliography..... 30

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

PAGES

ESTHER BRUTON..... 32

Early Art Education..... 32
Fashion Illustration..... 32
To Tahiti and Europe..... 33
Gives Up Commercial Art--Visits New Mexico..... 34
Successful Screens..... 35

Esther and Helen Visit New York..... 37
More Art Awards..... 39
Sketching Trip to Ghost Towns of Nevada..... 40
Applied Art and Mosaic Work..... 41
Representative Works..... 46

Private Collections..... 46
Exhibitions..... 47
Awards..... 48
Clubs..... 49
Bibliography..... 50

HELEN BRUTON..... 51

European Travel..... 52
Wood Blocks..... 53
Architectural Sculpture--Mosaics..... 54
Etchings..... 54
Paintings..... 55

Mural Paintings..... 56
California History of Fresco and Mosaic Art..... 57
Portraits..... 58
Etching Prize..... 59
University of California Mosaics..... 59

Illustrations..... 63
Representative Works..... 64
Permanent Collections..... 65
Exhibitions..... 65
Awards & Clubs..... 66
Bibliography..... 67

HELEN K. FORBES..... 68

Early San Francisco Background..... 69
Art Education..... 70
Studies Fresco in Europe..... 71

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

PAGES

Travels Abroad..... 72
California Sierra Trips..... 74
Decorative Watercolors..... 75
Death Valley Sketches..... 76
Western Subjects Preferred..... 77

Mural Commissions..... 78
Murals Under WPA..... 79
"Mothers' House" Murals..... 80
Wins Competition for Post Office Mural..... 82
Permanent Collections..... 82

The Artist's Philosophy..... 83
Representative Works..... 87
Private Collections..... 88
Permanent Collections..... 88
Exhibitions..... 88

Awards..... 91
Clubs..... 93
Bibliography..... 93

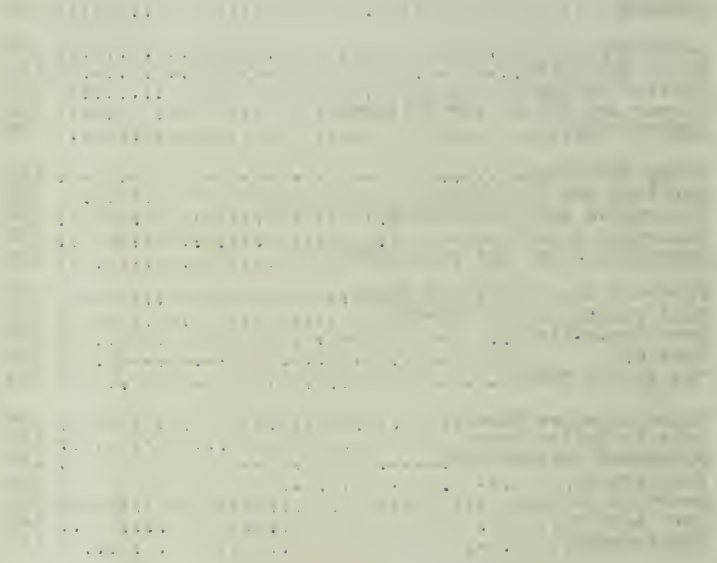
EDITH HAMLIN..... 95

Genealogy..... 96
Early Education..... 97
Art Education..... 98
Teaching and Commissions..... 99
Cacti Themes..... 100

San Francisco Exhibitions..... 101
Cross Country Trip..... 102
Summer Trip South and West..... 103
California Exhibitions..... 105
Marriage and Divorce..... 106

Mission Dolores Mural..... 107
Current Commissions..... 108
Representative Works..... 110
Private Collections..... 110
Permanent Collections..... 111

Exhibitions..... 111
Clubs..... 113
Bibliography..... 114



M A R G A R E T B R U T O N

1894..... . . .

Biography and Works

"PORTRAIT OF MY FATHER"

PROPERTY OF THE ARTIST

PREFACE

Three artists, to whom we may look in expectation for advanced art forms and an indigenous art of tomorrow, are Margaret, Esther and Helen Bruton. These talented women live with their mother in an old fashioned house in Alameda, on the edge of San Francisco Bay. In their rambling attic studio, they valiantly experiment in new media and manners. Margaret, the eldest, paints chiefly in water-colors and oils; while Esther and Helen work in both the fine and the graphic arts and decorative projects.

The three girls often exhibit together and sometimes cooperate in their varied artistic undertakings. When Helen won the competition for the mosaics in the Mother House at Fleishhaker Park in San Francisco, Margaret and Esther cut the thousands of tiny stones needed for the mosaic. The whole Bruton family works, plays and travels; now in pairs, now as a group. They are the modern artistic counterpart of the famed Bronte sisters in literature.

The Bruton sisters are well versed in appreciation of all the arts and contribute vividly to the cultural life of San Francisco's bay region. Their creative energies are a part of the prestige now accorded women artists in California. They are dominant among western artists nationally recognized in art and publishing circles.

Their father, Daniel Bruton, was born in Dublin, Ireland, one of thirteen children. He came to the United States with his family in his childhood. Their mother, Helen Bell, is of English-Irish descent, and was born in Belfast, Ireland. The mother takes part in all their activities and has consistently encouraged them in their artistic careers.

Daniel Bruton, a successful business man, first came to California for the American Tobacco Company, with whom he was connected, and in 1879, established his home in San Francisco.

A brother of Daniel Bruton, George, also settled in California and became a newspaper man, being one of the editorial staff of the Hearst-owned San Francisco Examiner. He died when twenty-seven years of age. William, the youngest brother, joined the other two in California and made his living by commercial art, being an illustrator and lithographer. He too, died a young man. The Bruton family has in its possession some of his original sketches of Alameda, and of the old "Neptune Gardens," now the pleasure resort, Neptune Beach. He drew many humorous advertising illustrations, and is thought to be the originator of the famous "Bull" of Bull Durham tobacco. His earnings for the most part were precarious, so that Daniel Bruton was prejudiced very strongly against art as a means of livihood. The fa-

ther opposed his daughters' wish to become artists, but their mother encouraged them, cared for their home and fostered plans for their art studies so that each of the sisters felt free to pursue her career despite the father's opposition.

MARGARET BRUTON

EARLY LIFE

Margaret Bruton was born in Brooklyn, New York, because her mother wished to be near relatives there at the birth of her first child. When the baby was two months old, Mrs. Bruton with her baby returned to San Francisco.

Margaret andher sisters all attended public school and high school in Alameda. Margaret, especially evidenced such talent in painting and drawing that in 1913 she began her art education at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art in San Francisco, where she studied under Frank Van Sloun. She had won a prize for her work when only twelve years old, and later a scholarship which enabled her to travel to New York and study at the Art Students' League. There she was a pupil of Frank Vincent Dumond and Robert Henri. She lived with her mother's relatives and studied art in New York for about four years. Her two sisters joined her later and all three pursued their art studies in the east.

INFLUENCE OF THE WAR

The three sisters traveled back and forth between their home in Alameda and their uncle's home in New York for several years, and in 1918, inbued with war fervor Margaret decided to give up her painting for a time and return to California to enlist in war service. For two years she lived in San Francisco and worked at occupational therapy at Letterman Hospital, where she was later joined by her sister Esther.

MONTEREY

After the Armistice was signed, Margaret returned to the old home in Alameda to rest, and soon resumed her own art work. Ambitious for further study she went down the coast to the old Spanish town of Monterey, near Carmel-by-the-Sea, haunt of artists and writers. There she studied with Armin Hansen in the open-air sketching class he conducted and became so enthusiastic over the beauty of that region that in 1924 the Brutons rented their home in Alameda, and the whole family moved down to Monterey, where they built an adobe-type studio house.

At an exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum, (about 1923) Margaret Bruton won a prize of $100 for an oil painting called "Barmaid," for which her sister Helen posed, and in 1925, at an exhibition held by the Santa Cruz Art League, she won another $100 prize for an oil-painting "Storm over

Monterey." Margaret Bruton was associated with those artists known as the "Monterey Group," and frequently exhibited with them.

STUDIES IN PARIS

Anxious to visit the galleries of Europe and study the best pictures of the old Masters as well as the modern school, Margaret Bruton visited England, France and Italy in 1925, accompanied by her sisters. She, however, remained for a year in Paris, studying at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere.

FIRST ONE-MAN SHOW

Upon her return to California, Margaret gave her first solo show at the Beaux Arts Gallery in San Francisco about the year 1926, and in 1928 she exhibited with the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, winning a prize. She also exhibited with the members' group at the Beaux Arts Gallery in their annual cooperative exhibitions.

PRESS COMMENT

Press comment in the San Francisco Chronicle of June 24, 1928 stated:

> "The members' group showing now at the Galerie Beaux Arts in Maiden Lane, is one of the most interesting given this season....among the most outstanding of these is 'Church' by Margaret Bruton...."

Of her one-man show at the Beaux Arts Gallery, H. L. Dungan commented in the Oakland Tribune in January, 1926:

> "'I wish I were more modern,' said Miss Margaret Bruton as we sat viewing her exhibition at the Club Beaux Arts in San Francisco. On this point Miss Bruton and I disagree. I doubt if extreme modernism has anything to offer that would improve Miss Bruton's art. It is satisfactory as it stands now, occupying a somewhat middle position between the new and the old. She has achieved the 'organization,' so dear to the heart of the moderns, without their distortion. She lays her color side by side in delightful harmony without obvious effort. There is one landscape in particular that illustrates these points. It is of a roadway leading by a house toward snow-covered mountains. It fits so smoothly into the eye that you are not conscious of any special arrangement of lines and planes and what-nots that intrude themselves so offensively in many of the modern 'organizations.' Yet the picture is a fine arrangement of line and planes and colors falling most naturally in the same landscape.
>
> "There are several views of old European towns that are also worthy of special consideration. There is something very substantial in the way she painted time-stained walls and light falling on stone steps or along winding streets.
>
> "Several interesting portraits are shown including one that brings to mind canvases out of Tahiti. But the young woman with bare shoulders and arms is a native of Monterey, Miss Bruton informs me, despite the pareu-like dress she wears. There is much good painting in this picture, as for instance the black-bobbed hair. At least the impression is black although the paint used, I suspect, was mostly blue and white with a dash of red.
>
> "Miss Bruton also exhibits a number of drawings, most of them well done. In fact the exhibition, as a whole, maintains an unusually high and even standard. I do not think so much of a white church and a curiously streaked sky she has painted, nor of two large and very solid trees in an otherwise good landscape, but these are small matters...."

JOINS BEAUX ARTS CLUB

Gene Hailey comments in the San Francisco Chronicle of January 23, 1927:

> "Miss Margaret Bruton of Monterey is a new member of the Club Beaux Arts, whose recent works are now showing. She presents oil portraits, landscapes and black and white drawings. The drawings are of the French Alps, Italy and Spain as well as the Monterey peninsula. Her most recent canvas of the spired church at Castroville will interest the ultra-modern art seeker, while her other oil landscapes will be very acceptable to the ultra-conservative art lovers."

WINS PRIZE FROM SOCIETY OF WOMEN ARTISTS

Of her work at the Exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, Gene Hailey said in the San Francisco Chronicle of March 20, 1927:

> "The Second Annual exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists brings forth work by 72 women....Margaret Bruton and others are almost revolters, while they taste new formulas."

One of the works exhibited was "Portrait of My Father," illustrated in this monograph. The planes and colors are direct and treated without affectation. The result is an admirable portrait.

A prize was awarded to Margaret Bruton for "The Window" by the San Francisco Society of Women Artists at the Emporium exhibition in November 1928. In September of the same year, she won a prize at the California Society of Etchers' show at Vickery, Aikens and Torrey's Gallery.

Of Margaret Bruton's exhibition with the San Francisco Art Association in 1928, Junius Cravens commented in the Argonaut of May 12, 1928:

> "....Margaret Bruton's portrait, 'My Mother,' was simple, forceful and altogether admirable."

TRIP TO NEW MEXICO

Traveling to New Mexico in 1929 in search of new material and to study the primitive life of the Pueblo Indians, Margaret, Esther and Mrs. Bruton spent six months at Taos Pueblo and in Santa Fe, returning to their Alameda home for Christmas.

Upon their return, the three sisters gave a group exhibition at the Beaux Arts Gallery in San Francisco. This was both Esther's and Helen's first show. The works shown by the three sisters comprised paintings, etchings, woodcuts and linoleum block prints.

Junius Cravens criticised this joint exhibition in the Argonaut of December 7, 1928:

> "Every artist who is sincerely interested in his work as a creative medium is, and ever continues to be, a student. He is never quite satisfied with what he does--never feels that in what he produces he has obtained the ultimate aim of creative effort. He does the best that he can do, as he goes along, constantly producing through his productions, learning, experimenting, building toward something better. He thus develops within himself something more significant and far more valuable than sheer technical skill. He establishes a reserve fund

of creative power, a fund which never entirely expends-cannot spend, in fact, as it is too great a force to be released all at one time. Thus he always has something in reserve toward which to strive. His gesture is never quite complete. If it is complete he is through, for he has then gone to the extreme limit which he is capable of reaching.

"This reserve force is ever present in the work of a truly creative individual, lurking just beneath the surface of his medium, keeping his products at an even keel, as it were, sustaining a high standard of production. At the same time, it constantly grows higher, and, now and again breaks forth in a flash of its full glory in some work which seems to have been really inspired.

"THREE TRUE ARTISTS"

"These fundamentals, applying as they do to all true artists, are evident in the works of Esther Helen and Margaret Bruton, who are holding a small joint exhibition of their paintings, etchings, woodcuts and linoleum block prints at the Galerie Beaux Arts. These three sisters go their separate ways, developing along different lines, each of them retaining her marked individuality, yet all motivated by an equal will for untiring effort, constant experimentation and production.

"The outstanding canvas among the several paintings of American Indian subjects which Margaret Bruton is showing is, in our opinion, 'Taos Woman.' The painting is solid, sure and clean. But above and beyond that, it is an exceptionally expressive work, standing as a very symbol, despite its realisms, of the hopeless, patient stolidity of a dying race. It is the Pueblo woman of today, clinging to the last vestige of her people, and gazing hopelessly into a future which does not exist.

"Though all three of the Brutons are showing more works than are herein described, the exhibition as a whole is much too small. Or perhaps not. One should, after all, be content with very little of something which is truly excellent...."

The critic of the San Francisco Chronicle, Aline Kistler, wrote of this group showing on December 1, 1929:

> "It is somewhat difficult to keep impressions of the three sisters in one's mind, although their work is quite dissimilar. (In fact it is easier to tell them apart by the characteristics of their work than it is by physical recognition). It was interesting to see the three of them in the Galerie Beaux Arts during the hanging of their show.
>
> "All three are stimulating, almost disconcerting. They are the sandy Celtic type, endowed with quick wit and abrupt response. They vary chiefly in stature and quality of temperament....
>
> "....Margaret Bruton, 'the tall one'--or is she really taller than Helen?--devotes her attention primarily to painting. The canvases and wash drawings shown here are all the result of her past summer in New Mexico, where she painted the Indians and the streets and one landscape. She seems to be the most sensitive of the three sisters. She withdraws into herself and is almost timid in her contact with the outside world. This sensitiveness is shown in her paintings in a rather unusual way. She seems to grasp the world of her own making with a firm grip to compensate for her evasion of actual things. In all but one painting she emphasizes the substance of the thing she has created. But this emphasis carries a strong element of truth with it. Her Indians are apathetic aborigines--not romantic figures or people struggling to adjust to life--just beings who find themselves in the world and don't bother even to wonder about it all...."

This same group-show by the three Brutons was then sent as a traveling exhibition to Bullock's Gallery on Wiltshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, and from there went to the Weyhe Gallery in New York.

GROUP EXHIBITION IN LOS ANGELES

Arthur Millier criticized the exhibition at Bullock's Wiltshire Gallery in Los Angeles on February 2, 1930, under the title "Three Talented Sisters":

> "Esther, Helen and Margaret Bruton, Californians, Impress by Intelligence of their Art.
>
> "....Some years ago, a screen by Margaret Bruton, by virtue of its imaginative power and decorative color, made many of the neighboring paintings in an exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum appear anemic. We have heard of her occasionally and a word or two of her sisters, Esther and Helen. Now, at the Little Gallery of Bullock's Wiltshire, we are shown the full range of the art of these gifted sisters from Monterey.
>
> "The showing consists of paintings and drawings by Margaret, decorative screens in silver and gold, wood engravings and drypoints by Esther and wood-block prints by Helen, and its immediate impression is on the score of the intelligence, order and clarity of style and craftsmanship displayed in the work of each of the sisters.
>
> "Here is an art exhibition which must make its appeal directly to one's sense of design. The wit of Esther, the broader humor of Helen and the serious interest Margaret evidently takes in the Pueblo Indians she paints, are all staked on clean, modern methods of working on colors or tones that are definite, steering clear of any borderland of sentimental haze that might put over works less soundly conceived.
>
> "But the layman need not be scared out by the word 'design'. We heard one visitor say of Margaret's painting of a window with cactus plants that 'she had never seen such a real window in a picture.' 'I just can't see this crazy modern art.'

INDIAN PORTRAITS

> "Margaret has many portraits of Indians worked out in clear design and strong simple tones.

> Her charcoal drawings of the same sitters are particularly impressive. She has also one landscape typical of Southern California, using Southland elements that the more 'pictorial' painter--who founds his picture generally on tradition--would reject as smacking of the picture postcard. It is just such a scene as one may see near Foothill Boulevard, a red-earth driveway, peppers, palm trees and a snowy mountain for background. Banal in a postcard, it triumphs here through good organization.
>
> "The high average of these California girls' work, the clarity of their style, is a real influence on the side of intelligence in Pacific Coast art. There is nothing theoretical about what they are doing; it is as pleasant to laymen as to artists or critics. But the intelligence with which they order the material and the excellence of their craftsmanship puts them on the side of the light."

(The article is illustrated by "Hopi Policeman," a charcoal drawing by Margaret; and by the "The Jury," by Esther Bruton.)

HONORS AT EXHIBITS

A painting by Margaret Bruton of a brown-skinned woman in a striking native costume, which she called "Rosie," won second Honorable Mention at the exhibition held by Women Artists at the Oakland Art Gallery. The Assistant Director of the Gallery, Florence Wieben Lehre, wrote in the Oakland Tribune of July 24, 1927:

> "....Whether or not we favor modern art, we must admit that the four outstanding works in the exhibition by Western women are of modern trend, and stronger than the more conservative things.
>
> "'Rosie,' by Margaret Bruton of Monterey. Outstanding, however, more because of their force, than anything else. They are excellently done,

> but there are others just as excellently done, perhaps, in Monterey--suggestive of Gaugin, perhaps because Gaugin was so famous for his South Sea subjects. We cannot look upon a simply handled painting of a Pacific Island maiden without thinking of him. 'Rosie,' done mostly in reds and greens, gives a decided feeling of solidity and the third dimension...."

(The article is illustrated by the painting "Rosie."

COLOR TENSION

Of Margaret Bruton's works shown at the Beaux Arts Gallery at the exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, "Augustine" received the Society's ribbon of honor. The San Francisco Examiner commented on November 10, 1929 thus aptly describes her use of "color tension":

> "Margaret Bruton's portrait 'Augustine,' which has received the ribbon of honor of the society is a vividly dramatic picture. That is, the tension has been partly created by the use of many colors, subtly applied, now in harmony and then in contrast. Violet, brown, black, etc. have been used with skill. There is mass to this painting...."

A frequent exhibitor with the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, the Club Beaux Arts, the California Society of Etchers and the San Francisco Art Association, press comment in 1932 praises the work of Margaret Bruton, as well as that of her two sisters.

Junius Cravens wrote in the Argonaut of November 11, 1932:

> "....Play children are scarce in the art world, partly because artists are prone to take themselves too seriously, and their art not seriously enough, and partly because they are too self-conscious to let themselves go, to lose them-

selves in honest expression; they cannot detach themselves from 'effect.' But show us sincere work, work that reflects the play spirit, painting which suggests that the artist may have been smiling as he worked, and perhaps singing or whistling between smiles and we will show there is something which comes pretty close to being a pure expression of the creative impulse.

"We have always recognized in the work of the sisters Bruton a spirit of revelry."

MORE THREE SISTER SHOWS

The Alameda Times-Star of July 26, 1932 states:

"Among paintings exhibited in the Legion of Honor Palace in San Francisco, are three done by Alameda sisters, the Misses Margaret, Helen and Esther Bruton, daughters of Mrs. Daniel Bruton, 1240 St. Charles St.

"Margaret Bruton has portrayed 'Cass Street' in which she has painted a horseman. Experts describe it as following the general idea of Sheets, Sample and Miller paintings but not perfect in technical skill."

The Oakland Tribune of August 18, 1932 comments:

"The old theory that a family can have only one genius is a fallacy, according to the praise won by three Bruton sisters, whose art is now attracting attention of critics, at the recent semi-annual exhibit at the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. Having heard much favorable comment on the work of the three sisters, Margaret, Helen and Esther Bruton of 1240 St. Charles Street, Lloyd Rollins, curator prevailed upon them to enter their latest work in the semi-annual exhibit.

"Margaret Bruton entered an oil painting depicting a scene in old Monterey, Helen entered a composition beach picnic scene done in oil, while Esther, who specializes in decorative work, submitted a decorative scene done in the Persian manner.

FRESCO AND TILE MURALS

"With more than 100 pieces of art work to their credit, the three sisters now are devoting most of their time to the new fresco type of art introduced by the Mexican artist, Diego Rivera, and in which the painting is done directly on a wall of wet plaster.

"We prefer a living art that is of some use,' Miss Helen Bruton declared, in explaining why the three sisters undertake this type of work.

"'While each of us has her own type of work, we find it a simple matter to work together on many of our problems' she said. 'Esther is now devoting all her time to etchings, wood-blocks, decorative panels and lithographs. We believe that we have so far to go before we are worthy of honors that we have not expected those awards which we have received. We have been painting and sketching together since childhood and much of our work has been of our own creation.'"

Beatrice Judd Ryan thus described the Bruton's home and activities in the Women's City Club Magazine of San Francisco in July 1932:

"In the old family home in Alameda, a stone's throw from the water's edge, on a street canopied by English elms and chestnuts, the three Brutons, Margaret, Helen and Esther, are working at present on fresco, pottery and prints.... an old-time home with a garden lying under the shade of oaks, where birds bathe in a basin, fashioned by Helen out of mosaics--an old-fashioned home, with a real wine cellar below, where Esther--well, she has designed amusing labels for home-brew--and an attic three flights up, now a studio, where Margaret has painted fresco on the plastered walls.

EARLY DAY TALES

"The Brutons three, are modern in their viewpoint on art, and these three tawny-headed women of Celtic background, have a wit, sparkle

and zest for life and work, enough for a round half dozen. Perhaps their adventurous spirit came from their grandfather, who left Dublin because his house became known as a meeting place for Sinn-Feiners and the contracts from the British government became scarce. Finally he settled in Brooklyn, New York, and came to live next door to a family named Duval, known for their bounteous hospitality. Guests from as far west as the romantic land of sunshine and gold (California) visited the Duvals, and one of these was James D. Phelan, father of Senator Phelan, who met his future wife, the beautiful Miss Kelly, in the Duval home. It was natural that the younger Bruton found a lure in the Stories of the west, and later that he should bring his bride to California. The Bruton girls are native daughters.

"Through the enthusiastic understanding of their mother the Brutons have been given the rich embroidery of their background in art experience. Monterey and Armin Hansen, New York Art League and Robert Henri, Paris and Andre L'Hote, Italy, New Mexico, Tahiti--all these have been the patterns of their development. And a real development it is, with a serious intent. Margaret's expression in decorative and portraiture--Helen in her pottery and etching--Esther in her prints and decorative screens--all show the same fine, gay spirit, but quite differently expressed according to their separate individualities and mediums...."

GHOST TOWNS OF NEVADA

The search for new scenes for her paint brushes led Margaret Bruton to the picturesque old ghost towns of the mining country of Nevada, where she and her family spent some months in Virginia City in the spring of 1933. The results of this sketching trip were shown in various exhibitions after their return. One of Margaret's paintings, done first as a water-color, and later developed into a large oil painting, "Mining Mountain," won the first prize of $100 at the

Oakland Art Gallery's annual exhibition in 1934. Margaret Bruton especially values this prize, as it was awarded by the vote of artists visiting the exhibition. She also won first prize at the Sacramento State Fair.

The sisters exhibited water colors done at Virginia City in the competitive water color exhibition at Gump's Galleries in March 1933. Margaret contributed "Mining Mountain," while Esther's water color; "Mansion in Ruins" won the third prize. Both were vigorously painted studies.

Junius Cravens wrote in the Argonaut of March 17, 1933:

> "It would seem that water color is constantly gaining in popularity among artists, and some of the best contemporary work is being done in that medium. The first competitive exhibition of water colors to be held at the Gump Galleries, like the Oakland show, includes works from the entire coast. But, just to be contrary, the best works in that collection are by local artists.
>
> "With the one possible exception of a painting, 'On the Mother Lode,' by Phil Paradise of Pasadena we felt that the outstanding works are 'Old Boats' by George Post, 'Gas Tanks' by Ruth Armer 'Spring Day' by Gene Kloss, 'Red Garage' by William Gaskin, 'Mining Mountains' by Margaret Bruton, 'Mansion in Ruins' by Esther Bruton, 'Landscape' by John Stump, and 'Still Life' by Heath Anderson. At the time of this writing the awards had not been made."

VIRGINIA CITY SCENES SHOWN IN LOS ANGELES

When the three talented sisters exhibited at the Ilsley Galleries in the Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, showing their Virginia City work as well as some of their earlier

pieces, Arthur Miller wrote in the Los Angeles Times of October 8, 1933:

WOMEN AGAIN LEAD FIELD IN ART EXHIBITS
OF THE WEEK
THE BRUTON SISTERS PAINT GAYLY

> "Life is one glad and glorious spectacle to those three California sisters--Margaret, Helen and Esther Bruton. Until you have seen through their eyes you may have no idea how gay this otherwise sad old world can be.
>
> "With their prints, their decorative screens, in which they use Taos Indian ceremonies for motifs, and with their larger oil paintings of Monterey and adjacent country, art lovers of East and West are pleasantly familiar.
>
> "To the humorist no grist grinds better than faded pretentiousness. Virginia City in its gold rush prime was nothing if not pretentious, the Bruton sisters are certainly--in addition to being artists--humorists. So the old crumbling, red-brick mining town at last finds its true historians.
>
> "The cemetery with its marble lamb, dove and saint, the somnolent 'Cash Store,' bathed in glorious light, the funeral parlor gradually attending its own funeral--these with their background of sharply defined mountains make fascinating pictures. If the once-proud fronts of Nevada City's buildings are dying in these pictures, it is a colorful 'Death in the Afternoon' with all flags flying.

"MINING MOUNTAIN" WINS FIRST PRIZE

Glenn Wessels criticised "Mining Mountain," which won first prize at the Oakland Art Gallery's Annual, in the Argonaut of April 27, 1934:

> "Margaret Bruton wins first place in the careful elimination contest conducted by the Oakland Gallery in which both the visitors to the

gallery and the artists and a jury of three separate divisions takes place.

"We may then fairly say that 'Mining Mountains,' represents just about the kind of painting which the mythical well informed average man likes. Technically, it is precisely painted and brush freedom is closely curbed. The color is flatly luminous and rather warm; the treatment almost 'postery.'

"The scene is taken in Virginia City, Where Miss Bruton along with several others of the East Bay group, spent some time this spring. Pictorially the town must be rich in material, for several of the successful paintings in this show were executed there. It is distinctly encouraging that such a painting should be the final choice after passing through the sundry tests upon various tastes which Director Clapp applies....."

At the exhibition at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, held in 1934, the Oakland Tribune praised Margaret's painting "Comstock Lode." H. L. Dungan, the Tribune art critic, wrote on October 21, 1934:

"Among the artists included in the exhibition assembled by the Western Association of Art Museum directors and showing in the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, we have Margaret Bruton.

"'On the Comstock Lode,' a view looking up hill at scattered old houses in Virginia City is the best painting I have seen of the many that have come from brushes of artists, who have haunted Virginia City for the last few years. It is a picture that grows on you as only a sound work can."

PROGRESSIVES OF 1934

"Here Come the Progressives," Howard Talbot announced in the Wasp-News Letter of October 27, 1934:

"The Progressive California Painters and Sculptors who refuse to kow-tow to the edicts of the

old regime art juries and who gave one of San Francisco's most entertaining and historical exhibits under the sponsorship of Joseph Danysh at the City of Paris Gallery after they were cold-shouldered at the Legion Palace, have assembled at the Danysh Galleries, 166 Geary Street, and will intrigue the Public with their newest work until November 3. Also included in the Progressive show are Esther Bruton, Margaret Bruton and Helen Bruton...."

The Oakland Tribune commented on the Bruton's exhibition at the Danysh Galleries in San Francisco, on January 13, 1935:

"ALAMEDA SISTERS DISPLAY OILS, DRAWINGS, AND OTHER WORK IN SAN FRANCISCO

"Those three amazing Bruton sisters of Alameda, who paint, etch, drow, carve and mosaic, exhibit their works at the Joseph Danysh Galleries, 166 Geary Street, San Francisco. There isn't much under the sun in the way of art they don't do and do with a liberal hand--a sort of joyous, abandon that is pleasing to behold. The three sisters are modern in their views on art, yet there is a primitive quaintness about it all that touches delightfully whatever emotions we have left. It is not great art, but sincere, honest art, human art, with a touch of humor in it. Even the old Virginia City ruins they (or one or two of them) painted, drawn or etched do not make you sad, as ruins ought to do. Something of the richness and joy of Virginia City in its prime still clings to them.

"Margaret Bruton has also been in Virginia City. She exhibits that old city in oil on paper and a dramatic print 'Tailings' showing the great mine dumps of pioneer days."

RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBIT

Junius Cravens wrote in the San Francisco News of April 20, 1935:

"Margaret Bruton of Alameda is showing a more or less retrospective collection of her paintings at the Oakland Art Gallery. Nine or ten of them are sizable canvases. The remaining are small sketches in oils on paper.

"Like numerous other California artists, Miss Bruton has 'worked' the deserted mining towns of the lode country--a vein which now seems to be about exhausted, if not actually overworked.

"Miss Bruton's three large canvases of the mining country scene, are outstanding among her landscapes. And, in all justice, it must be said that, of these three paintings, only the one called 'Retrospect' goes in for wreckage in a big way. Her execution of these canvases, including some lovely color, is beyond reproach."

Glen Wessels said in the Argonaut of April 26, 1935:

"Margaret Bruton is another of those painters who is making Virginia City famous. The Chamber of Commerce Society, or whatever it is, of those parts should appreciate the efforts of the local group which have depicted its church, its shacks, its authentic ruins and gravel dumps so charmingly. We are getting to know Virginia City without ever going there--but these artists you know, just about when we go, they'll have discovered some other place, and we'll find ourselves just mere tourists, trying to see the things the artists saw.

"Margaret Bruton varies between true painting in her oils, and a sort of graphic design in her sketches. It is color rather than light which intrigues, and pattern above all."

FAMILY DRIVES ACROSS CONTINENT

The next year, 1935, found the Bruton quartet traveling to the east in an open car of ancient vintage; they had planned to go on to New York, but the car's performance

was so erratic that at Indianapolis they turned back, and returned to their home in Alameda.

THEY TRAVEL TO MEXICO

Not content with their trip east, the three girls felt the next steps in their art led to Mexico. So they journeyed to Mexico City, to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and to Taxco--accompanied as always by their indefatigable and courageous mother. They spent several months in Taxco, haunt of foreign writers and artists, and became the special friends of the Japanese artist, Kitagawa. In Mexico City, they studied the murals of Diego Rivera, and visited the beauty spots of the surrounding countryside, but returned to Taxco to spend most of their time sketching and painting. Their Mexican sketches were shown with great success at various exhibitions after their return to Alameda.

Of the group exhibition held by the three sisters at the Danysh Galleries, San Francisco, Junius Cravens wrote in the San Francisco News of January 12, 1935:

> "The three Bruton sisters, Margaret, Esther and Helen, jointly are holding an exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints at the Danysh Gallery.
>
> "The majority of Margaret's numerous small landscapes in gouache were done at Virginia City. They are richly colorful gems of the Gold country, simple broad and cleancut.

> "While all three of the Brutons capably do serious work, their delightful sense of humor will out for its big moments in some of their drawings and etchings. Bruton humor never 'outs' at the expense of artistic quality, however, and it is never either bitter or cheap. The Bruton show is neither great nor profound, but it is of sufficient weight and quality to be well worth seeing."

At the Bay Region Art Association's first annual exhibition, held at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, Margaret Bruton won an Honorable Mention for her painting "Buyers and Sellers," later shown at Gump's Gallery in San Francisco.

CRITIC COMMENTS ON WOMENS' PLACE IN ART

At the exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists held in San Francisco in November, 1936, Margaret Bruton had the distinction of winning the third prize with "Mexican Street Scene." Glen Wessels commented in the Argonaut for November 6, on this award and of the place of women in art:

> "There has been a good deal said about feminine lack of genius and it is true that the great women whose names appear as original creators in the arts or sciences are so few and far between that they might well be taken as the exception which prove the rule.
>
> "But there are a few pieces at the current exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists so excellent that they stand up without consideration of the sex of the worker. No one can object as to the disposition of the first and second prizes....
>
> "The third prize was well bestowed upon Margaret Bruton."

At the exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association held at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1936, Margaret Bruton had the distinction of being awarded the Anne Bremer Purchase Prize of $100 for one of her Mexican paintings, "Night Fiesta." The San Francisco Examiner of November 15, 1936 commented:

'NIGHT FIESTA' BY MARGARET BRUTON,
IS WINNER OF FIRST PRIZE

"Moods close to home are pursued by many artists in the Watercolor Annual of the San Francisco Art Association at the San Francisco Museum of Art.

"When artists perpetually search for aesthetic interests only in remote places and exotic styles, they usually are confessing a lack of independent sensibility. They are like a man who cannot enjoy wholesome food unless he smothers its taste in spices.

"Hence, perhaps one should cast a hint of dispraise at Margaret Bruton's first prize, 'Night Fiesta,' a scene of distant Mexico. A work of talent however, is proof against any rule. Miss Bruton's picture is lively, interesting and well organized."

The News-Letter of November 14, 1936 wrote:

"....Anne Bremer Memorial Purchase Prize went to Margaret Bruton for her 'Night Fiesta,' a gay Mexican scene of Indians being intensely amused by a carousal...."

Glen Wessels wrote in the Argonaut Of November 13, 1936:

"The second annual show of watercolors given by the San Francisco Art Association in the Museum of Art in the Civic Center is better selected and better hung than was the first. The show is remarkable both for variety and freshness in the better works. Inevitably most of

> 'influences' which are current in contemporary art are represented, old influences such as impressionism and newer ones, but since excellence is not a matter of complete originality alone, but rather a matter of how well the artist's intention is carried out, no one can complain.
>
> "Margaret Bruton wins the Anne Bremer Memorial Purchase Prize with 'Night Fiesta.' Here again It must have been hard for the jury to choose between her excellent entries."

Margaret Bruton held a one-man show at the Berkeley Women's City Club in January 1937. The Club's Bulletin for January commented:

> "Margaret Bruton of Alameda is acknowledged as one of the most distinguished artists on this coast. She painted in oil, and is one of the few to use oil on paper. She is one of the well known Bruton sisters, all of whom are artists....She will have on display....'Mining Mountain,'....and 'Mexican Street.'"

Margaret is a member of the San Francisco Art Association, the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, and the California Society of Etchers, with all of whom she has frequently exhibited and won awards.

MARGARET BRUTON

REPRESENTIVE

WORKS

OILS:

Barmaid
Mining Mountain
Storm Over Monterey

PORTRAITS:

Augustine
My Mother
Portrait of My Father

MISCELLANEOUS:

Buyers and Sellers
Cass Street
Church
Comstock Lode
Hopi Policeman (Charcoal drawing)
Mexican Street Scene
Night Fiesta
Retrospect
Rosie
Tailings (Print)
Taos Woman
Window, The

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California
Galerie Beaux Arts
One-Man Show 1926
Augustine (Portrait; ribbon of honor) December 1929
Taos Woman
Cass Street November 1932

San Francisco Society of Women Artists
Portrait of My Father March 1927
Church November 1928
Window, The November 1928
Mexican Street Scene (Third prize) November 1936

San Francisco Art Association
My Mother (portrait) May 1928
Night Fiesta (Anne Bremer Purchase Prize $100) 1936

California Society of Etchers
Represented September 1928

Gump's Gallery
Mining Mountain March 1933

Palace of the Legion of Honor
Comstock Lode October 1934

Danysh Galleries
Tailings (print) January 1935

Bay Region Art Association's First Annual Exhibition
Buyers and Sellers (Honorable Mention) 1935

Oakland, California
Oakland Art Gallery
Mining Mountain (Oil; First Prize, $100) 1934
Retrospect April 1935
Portrait of My Father April 1935
Western Women Artists Exhibition
Rosie (Second Honorable Mention) July 1937

Berkeley, California
Berkeley Women's City Club
One-Man Show January 1937
Mining Mountain
Mexican Street

Los Angeles, California
Los Angeles Museum of Art
Barmaid ($100 prize) 1923
Bullock's Wiltshire Gallery
Hopi Policeman (Charcoal drawing) February 1930

Santa Cruz, California
Santa Cruz Art League
Storm Over Monterey (Oil; $100 Prize) 1925

AWARDS:

Los Angeles Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California 1923
$100 Prize for "Barmaid" (Oil)

Santa Cruz Art League, Santa Cruz, California 1925
$100 Prize for "Storm Over Monterey" (Oil)

Galerie Beaux Arts, San Francisco, California 1929
Ribbon of Honor for "Augustine" (portrait)

Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, California 1934
First Prize, $100 for "Mining Mountain" (Oil)

Bay Region Art Association's First Annual Exhibition

San Francisco, California 1935
Honorable Mention for "Buyers and Sellers"

San Francisco (California) Art Association 1936
Anne Bremer Purchase Prize, $100 for "Night Fiesta"

San Francisco (California) Society of Women Artists 1936
Third Prize for "Mexican Street Scene"

Western Women Artists Exhibition, Oakland, (California)
Art Gallery 1937
Second Honorable Mention for "Rosie"

CLUBS:

Member
California Society of Etchers
Club Beaux Arts
San Francisco Art Association
San Francisco Society of Women Artists

MARGARET BRUTON

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E S T H E R B R U T O N

1896..... . . .

Biography and Works

"FIESTA"

PROPERTY OF THE ARTIST

ESTHER BRUTON

Esther, the second of the Bruton sisters, devotes her talents to etching, wood-cuts, advertising-art and murals, although, she too, does some drawing and painting, and has exhibited in art galleries and museums with Margaret and Helen. Esther's work is an outlet for her sense of humor, as is shown in the series of prints she has exhibited with the California Society of Etchers, and in her mural "Circus Bar" for the cocktail lounge of the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. Her skill and capacity to decoratively depict her observations of current life add zest to her art career.

EARLY ART EDUCATION

Esther was born in Alameda, graduated from high school there, and then went to New York to join Margaret. There she studied under George Bridgeman the anatomist at the Art Students' League from 1917 to 1918. For a time she thought she wanted to teach, and took a normal school training. However, she found that her true vocation was art. She studied commercial art for two years at the New York School of Fine and Applied Arts, conducted by Parsons. While she was studying in New York, the third sister, Helen came and joined Margaret at the Art Students' League.

FASHION ILLUSTRATION

Esther's first position was as an advertising illustrator for the department store of Lord and Taylor in New

York, where she worked until 1921, when she and her sister Helen returned to Alameda to join the family. Wishing to remain in California with her mother and sisters, Esther obtained a position as resident fashion illustrator with I. Magnin's department store in San Francisco, remaining there for seven years, with only brief intervals of travel during her vacations; often with her sisters on sketching trips.

TO TAHITI AND EUROPE

When the rest of the family moved to the old Spanish mission town of Monterey, in 1924, Esther spent a four-months' vacation in Tahiti, attracted, as many artists are by the exotic allure of the South Seas. There Esther and an artist friend, Ina Perham Storey, took their meals with a Scotch-woman who lived in Gaugin's house, about seven kilometers out of Papeete. They lived, however, in a small grass-hut close to the native life. One of their neighbors on the adjoining plantation was Gaugin's half-caste son. He was an indolent, dreamy man, Esther recalls, who showed little interest in art. He had one interesting thing by his famous father a painting on wood, fan shaped, which, Esther thinks, may have been intended for a native fan. It was the only Gaugin painting she saw on the island. (This was before the discovery of a wooden statue "Polynesian Leper" by Gaugin, which was found by chance in Papeete, and news of which was brought back to

San Francisco by Ray Bethers, the artist).

Resuming for a while her fashion illustrations for I. Magnin's department store, Esther later took a year's leave of absence in 1925, to join her sisters Margaret and Helen in a European trip. There the three sketched, studied and saw the countryside of France and England, and all three attended art classes in Paris at the Studio of La Grande Chaumiere.

GIVES UP COMMERCIAL ART--VISITS NEW MEXICO

After her European art experience, Esther decided that she wanted to devote her whole interest to the fine arts. She gave up commercial art finally in 1929, and spent three months with her family in Taos, New Mexico, sketching and painting.

The results of Esther's six months' stay in the Pueblo of Taos and in Santa Fe, were shown in the joint exhibition which the three Brutons held at the Beaux Arts Gallery in San Francisco, in December 1929.

Junius Cravens wrote in the Argonaut of December 7, 1929, praising both her wood-cuts and her decorative screens:

> "Esther Bruton, who appears to have an extraordinarily elastic mind, is showing one of her beautifully rendered etchings, 'Lady and the Cowboy,' and an excellent wood-cut, 'Gentlemen of the Jury.' Both of these prints reveal her rare humorous appreciation for human character and homely situations, which is only one, though a very interesting angle, of her broad mental range.

SUCCESSFUL SCREENS

"But it is in two decorative screens that we see the artist, in one of those revealing flashes of genius which comes now and again, at something near her full power. Ordinarily, a decorative screen, no matter how well it is executed is--well, after all, just a screen. Upon seeing most of them, one is apt to sense that the artist has grown restive of a stretch of flat canvas and has resorted to a broken form--to 'something different'--more because of boredom, or lack of invention, or, more likely, for a potential commercial consideration, than through an impelling urge to create for himself a new form of expression. Not so with Esther Bruton. Her two screens are the result of complete conceptions, whether she was conscious of the fact or not, and were created because the urge was there and demanded being given concrete form.

"Both screens are so complete, so perfect, that it would be difficult to award a decision of superior merit between them. 'Rabbit Hunt,' depicting Indians on horseback, is full of lively action. 'Corn Dance,' based upon a Pueblo ceremonial, is necessarily theatrical in subject, and is worked out in beautifully rhythmic patterns. For both screens, silver and varying tones of gold, finely balanced, serve as backgrounds upon which the patterns are worked out in nicely restrained color.

"We need not fear that Esther Bruton, having evolved two such altogether lovely objects, will turn to the manufacture of an endless line of screens. She is too sure an artist to fall into that snare. It is even more than possible that she may never again indulge in that particular form of expression. One almost hopes that she will not do so, but that she may be content, rather, to value them merely as touch-stones by which she has been able to test her ability to do greater things...."

The San Francisco Examiner, of December 1, 1929, commented on the joint exhibit, saying of Esther:

> "The little one is Esther. She moves with a quick, sure gesture. One sees in the very way she handles the canvases and prints; the delicacy and care she uses in her art. Here are the two beautiful screens. Both are in silver and gold-leaf, painted with this color in a carefully organized design. They were done last summer when she and Margaret were in Taos. One is, 'The Rabbit Hunt,' the other is of an 'Indian Corn Dance.' Both are exquisitely done, the finely done figures of Indians, horses, cowboys and dogs, all playing well-considered parts in the total design. The corn dance is particularly effective with its pagentry and its charming bits of humor.
>
> "Esther Bruton is also represented by two prints, one is a drypoint, 'Lady and Cowboy,' that is close in spirit to the circus etching, that was awarded the California Society of Etchers' prize this year. The other is 'Gentlemen of the Jury.'"

The three sister exhibit was later shown at Bullock's Wiltshire Gallery in Los Angeles, and then traveled to New York where it was exhibited at the Weyhe Gallery, and won much praise in art columns.

Again a screen by Esther is illustrated in the Los Angeles Saturday Night of February 1, 1930, which commented also on her wood and linoleum block prints:

> "....For genuine vigor, see what the Bruton sisters have mustered into their exhibition at Bullock's Wiltshire, and do not confuse them. There are Esther, Margaret and Helen, and all three work and play together, mostly at Monterey, but their subjects come from New Mexico, circuses, street-cars, life--and all with much versatility.
>
> "If Helen and Margaret are extremes of humor and pathos, then Esther is a happy combination of both. In a wood-cut, 'Gentlemen of the Jury,' one detects the satire, sans bitterness, of a Forain jury. In 'Circus,' or 'Lady and the Cowboy,'--both clean-bitten etchings--there is

sensed a mundane appeal akin to that of Mabel Dwight and Peggy Bacon, yet free from their sordid revelry.

"Linoleum-block printing is also essayed by Esther Bruton. The two screens placed here, are breaths from desert reaches, from Hopi-land. Strange, yet homely sights about the communal Pueblo dwellings are skilfully brushed in with unobstrusive colors, breaking the gold and silver panels into natural units. Here, the festal 'Corn Dance,' is coming to a climax; there, a 'Rabbit Hunt' graphically streaks across a sandy stretch. Motion, rhythmic, with pagentry of ancient ceremony possesses the one, while tensely-directed movement invigorates the other. Immediately one is transported to Santa Fe, reviewing again its never-exhausted curiosities and native artistry."

ESTHER AND HELEN VISIT NEW YORK

In 1930 Esther and Helen went to New York for another winter, hoping to work at book illustrating for support while there. It happened to be one of the worst winters of the economic crisis, and the two girls found only one book to illustrate, a satire on Commander Byrd's voyage to the South Pole. The book was called "Bird Life at the Pole," by Christopher Robin, and the two girls who had spent months looking for work, had to illustrate the book in ten days, as a rush job. The parody was supposed to be told to Wolcott Gibbs, of the New Yorker Magazine. It was published in 1931 and had a tremendous vogue, to which the Bruton's humorous illustrations contributed greatly.

Home again, they exhibited with the California Society of Etchers in San Francisco, during September 1929.

Esther had the distinction of winning the second prize with one of her dry-points of a circus, called "Top of the Tent."

The Art Digest of New York commented on her work in the October 1, 1929 issue and praised her "comic high art:"

> "The second prize was awarded to Esther Bruton for one of her two small dry-points which are both entitled 'Circus.' Here again do we find in a print which superficially, would appear to be no more than a humorous trifle, a seriously and splendidly organized design in which nothing unnecessary has been employed, and yet from which nothing which was essential to its completion was omitted. The fact that 'Circus' might to all intents, be called a 'comic detracts not a whit from its qualities as an example of true artistic expression...."

A clipping in the artist's scrap-book from the Christian Science Monitor, October 1929, comments on Esther's prize winning etching:

> "...'Top of the Tent,' by Esther Bruton, was one of the few prints entered that is contemporary in feeling, an etching ably executed, depicting a cross-section of circus life. In swinging acrobats, rhythmically placed against the folds of the tent, she has achieved a certain style; a pull that arrests the attention at the upper half of her composition, to which she has subordinated the chariot-riders, animal cages and other circus trappings, which fill the lower level of her space...."

Junius Cravens wrote in the Argonaut of October 2, 1931 of Esther's and Helen's prints exhibited with the California Society of Etchers:

> "The drypoints by both Helen and Esther Bruton, revive a spark of hope for the future of the society. With characteristic whimsy and humor they succeed somehow in setting their honorable craft on its feet. Then there are also such substantial exhibitors as Roi Partridge, Arthur Millier, and others--splendid technicians, whose

> works have all but become a California tradition. But in considering the show as a whole in retrospect, one is inclined to sum it up with 'Thank God for the Brutons.'"

MORE ART AWARDS

The San Francisco Call-Bulletin said of the exhibit of the San Francisco Art Association, held at the Palace of the Legion of Honor on May 7, 1932, at which Esther received Honorable Mention for "Eagle Dance:"

> "In a show outstandingly modern, hung at the Legion of Honor, awards went to the works that smacked strongly of the tempo and mores of today and perhaps tomorrow.
>
> "Easterners shared with Californians in the awards, although the show as predominantly of western origin, with the chief mass of contribution from San Francisco and the Bay Region. Chief in interest was 'Eagle Dance,' by Esther Bruton of Alameda, which received a certificate of honorable mention."

The San Francisco Examiner said on April 24, 1932:

> "....So much good work by California artists is represented in the show that it is impossible to do it justice....'Eagle Dance,' a painting by Esther Bruton, is unsurpassed for sheer decorativeness...."

And of the Summer Annual of California paintings shown at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, Junius Cravens wrote in the Argonaut of July 29, 1932:

> "There is an almost endless list of canvases in the summer annual which impressed us as being exceptionally good, and which we would like to mention in detail, had we the time and space to do so here...."
>
> "Esther Bruton turns frankly to imitation of East Indian or Persian art in the design for a

three panel screen. But it is one of the most beautifully executed pieces of decorative art that we have seen....."

SKETCHING TRIP TO GHOST TOWNS OF NEVADA

The next year, Esther joined the family's sketching trip to the old ghost town of Virginia City, in the mining country of Nevada, where the three artists spent some months drawing and painting.

At the competitive exhibition of watercolors, held at Gump's Gallery in San Francisco in March 1933, Esther Bruton had the distinction of winning the third prize with her painting of a Virginia City ghost town scene, "Mansion in Ruins."

In the autumn of 1933, the three sisters held a joint exhibition in October at the Illsley Galleries of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. It was highly successful, and gained for the three artists sales and much attention.

When the Amberg-Hirth Co-operative "Form and Function "Galleries in San Francisco held an exhibition of decorative work in connection with the Federal Housing Act in November 1934, the San Francisco Examiner commented on Esther's work on November 18, as follows:

"....Esther Bruton, one of the Bruton trio, has on exhibit an exquisite mosaic coffee table, and two screens--gold and silver leaf on wood panels. The subjects on the latter--American Hopi Indian rituals.

"Originality is the note of the entire show."

APPLIED ART AND MOSAIC WORK

Esther's decorative work is praised by the Oakland Tribune of April 15, 1934, in an article on the exhibit of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists:

> "Members of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists are exhibiting works of art at the de Young Museum, Golden Gate Park....Particularly did I admire Esther Bruton's terazzo coffee stand. Cocktails would look all right on it. It's a low stand with eight sides and four Monel metal legs. But it's the top of the table that's fascinating. The design is modern, shot with brass, copper and Monel metal wires and strips to separate the colors after the manner of cloisonne. The whole surface has been ground smooth and hard. It's Miss Bruton's first terazzo to be exhibited. She decided some others she did were not successful. They cracked, I believe or did something out of the way.
>
> "The coffee stand is a beautiful piece of work both from the standpoint of the craftsman and the artist...."

The next year, the three girls and their mother made a trip east in an old open car, getting as far as Indianapolis, and later in the year they spent three months in Mexico, visiting Taxco, Mexico City and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Of the joint exhibition held by the three sisters at the Danysh Galleries in San Francisco in January 1935, the Oakland Tribune commented on January 15, 1935:

> "....There isn't much under the sun in the way of art they (the Bruton Sisters) don't do, and do with a liberal and a sort of joyous abandon, that is pleasing to behold.
>
> "....Esther Bruton, shows many Virginia City scenes, even making the old graveyard an acceptable art design. She shows also, unless I have the sisters confused, some lively Mexican scenes,

> suggestions I take it for frescoes. At least they would make good frescoes."

At the California Pacific-International Exposition, held in San Diego in 1935-36, Esther Bruton exhibited one of her decorative screens, "The Circus," and her painting "Tehauntepec Fiesta," a brilliantly colored scene of dancers at a Mexican Fiesta. Both of these are illustrated in the catalogue of the expositon.

The versatile Esther Bruton then turned her attention to painting murals. For her first series of mural panels decorating the Fairmont Hotel Lounge and Cocktail Bar, she chose one of her favorite subjects, the circus. From the "Man on the Flying Trapeze," to the "Acrobats" and the "Performing Tiger," the series is delightfully depicted in brilliant color on a background of gold-leaf. The ceiling of the room is in silver, which contrasts sharply with the gold background and brilliant color of the murals themselves. The room as a whole was designed by Timothy Pflueger. Junius Cravens wrote in the San Francisco News Of May 11, 1935:

> "The Fairmont Circus Lounge and Snack Buffet, which was officially opened last night with a dinner dance, turns out to be something more than merely another delightful cocktail room. It is an artistic achievement. This has become possible partly because Timothy Pflueger, the architect, planned the interior with a definite idea of the use of wall decorations in mind, and partly because he procured a real artist--and just the right real artist--to design and execute the decorations.

"The Circus is a subject made to order for Esther Bruton, who did the Fairmont murals. Those who are familiar with her decorative screens and other applied art works, as well as with her paintings and etchings, may readily realize why that is true.

"While the Fairmont lounge decorations provided Miss Bruton with a subject which is particularly well suited to her capabilities, in rendering them she has proven her creative strength by dominating her subject and utilizing it merely as a medium rather than an objective. The result is one of the best mural jobs that has been done in the Bay Region--a mural which decorates a room without overpowering it and which seems to belong there.

"Aside from their artistic merits, Miss Bruton's decorations are delightfully humorous caricatures of the Circus scene. The artist appears to have had so much fun doing them that they can scarcely fail to be entertaining. Yet, despite their bizarre character, they are rendered with admirable restraint and in excellent taste.

"In appreciation of the glamour with which Miss Bruton has enhanced its walls, the Fairmont lounge has named its latest cocktail in her honor. The artist is known to her intimates as 'Ecky' (a nickname for Esther). Her fame is now spelled at the Fairmont both on and in the glass in the form of the Ecky Bruton cocktail. That moves her right up in line with Lillian Russell, U.S. Grant and Mickey Mouse..."

(The article is illustrated by "The Man on the Flying Trapeze," from her design).

(Splendid illustrations of the "Circus Bar" and of the cocktail lounge at the Fairmont Hotel, which Timothy Pflueger designed, may be seen in the American Architect for January, 1936).

At the Graphic Arts Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association, held at the Palace of the Legion of Honor in September 1935, Esther exhibited a dry-point etching "Market 2," which was awarded the $30 Purchase Prize for etching. The Market Scene is illustrated in the San Francisco New-Letter and Wasp for September 21, 1935.

Her Hawaiian scenes in an advertising booklet for the Dole Pineapple Company of Hawaii were so successful that some of them were reproduced as advertisements in the Ladies Home Journal and Pictorial Review for November and December, 1936. Although Esther had never been to Hawaii, she used her visit to Tahiti for natural detail in the glamourous South Sea island setting.

She also illustrated an advertising booklet, "Behind your Sugar Bowl," for the California-Hawaiian Sugar Company, and designed the mural decorations for their offices in the Matson Building in San Francisco.

Esther Bruton was selected chairman of the jury for the 57th Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association at the San Francisco Museum of Art in April 1937, and carried out this difficult duty very successfully. Previously she had been a member of the jury at the 1935 autumn exhibition.

In the winter, 1936-37, the three sisters spent several months in the desert at Palm Springs, California, but

found the weather unusually cold, and not conducive to many outdoor sketches. However, the results of the trip will be shown at future exhibitions in the San Francisco bay region.

Esther Bruton is a member of the California Society of Etchers, as well as of the San Francisco Art Association, and annually exhibits with both associations.

ESTHER BRUTON

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

ETCHINGS:

Lady and the Cowboy
Corn Dance
Rabbit Hunt

MURALS:

Mural panels, Cocktail Lounge, Fairmont Hotel
San Francisco
Man on the Flying Trapeze
Acrobats and Performing Mural decorations
for the offices of the California
Hawaiian Sugar Company in the Matson
Building in San Francisco

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Illustrated, in conjunction with Helen Bruton,
a book called "Bird Life at the Pole," a
satire on Commander Byrd's voyage to the
Pole, by Christopher Robin (1930-31).
Illustrated an advertising booklet for the
Dole Pineapple Company of Hawaii
Also did the illustrating in the advertising
booklet; "Behind your Sugar-Bowl," for the
California-Hawaiian Sugar Company

MISCELLANEOUS:

Corner in Natchez, A (pen and ink drawing)
Eagle Dance
Finis
Gentlemen of the Jury (wood-cut)
Jury, The (wood-engraving)
Mansion in Ruins
Snake Eyes
Tehuantepec Fiesta

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS:

Cocktail Lounge, Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco
Mural Panels: "Man on the Flying Trapeze"
"Acrobats" and "Performing Tiger"
Offices, California Hawaiian Sugar Company, in
Matson Building, San Francisco
Mural Decorations

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California
Galerie Beaux Arts
Represented — December 1928
Corn Dance (screen) — December 1929
Gentlemen of the Jury (wood-cut)
Lady and the Cowboy (etching)
Rabbit Hunt (screen)
Circus, The (screen) — October 1932

Women's City Club Auditorium, Decorative Arts Exhibition
Represented — February 1929

Vickery, Atkins and Torrey Galleries,
California Society of Etchers' Exhibition
Top of the Tent (drypoint; second-prize) — September 1929
Snake Eyes — December 1933

California Palace of the Legion of Honor,
San Francisco Art Association
Eagle Dance (Honorable Mention) — May 1932

Graphic Arts Exhibition
Market 2 (drypoint etching; $30 purchase-prize)

California Artists' Summer Exhibition
Represented — July 1932

Finis — December 1932

Gump's Galleries
Mansion in Ruins (Third Prize, $20) — March 1933

M. H. de Young Memorial Museum
San Francisco Society of Women Artists Exhibition
Terazo Coffee Stand — March 1934

Amberg-Hirth Co-operative Form and Function Galleries
A Mosaic Coffee Table and two Screens — November 1934

Danysh Galleries
Represented — December 1934
Virginia City (Nevada) scenes and Mexico scenes — January 1935

Los Angeles, California
Bullock's Wiltshire Gallery
Circus, The (decorative screen) — January 1930
Corn Dance (screen)
Gentlemen of the Jury (wood-cut)
Lady and the Cowboy
Rabbit Hunt (screen)
Ilsley Galleries, Ambassador Hotel
Represented — October 1933

Oakland, California
Oakland Art Gallery
Represented — June 1932

San Diego, California
California-Pacific-International Exposition
Circus, The (decorative screen)
Tehuantepec Fiesta

AWARDS:

California Society of Etchers' Exhibition, San Francisco
Second Prize for drypoint "Top of the Tent" — 1929

San Francisco Art Association
Honorable Mention for "Eagle Dance" — 1932

Gump's Galleries, San Francisco
Third Prize, $20, for "Mansion in Ruins"

San Francisco Art Association, Graphic Arts Exhibition
Purchase Prize, $30, for the drypoint etching "Market 2" — 1935

CLUBS:

Member:
California Society of Etchers
San Francisco Art Association

ESTHER BRUTON

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H E L E N B R U T O N

1898..... . . .

Biography and Works

"DECORATION IN TILE MOSAIC"--MOTHERS' HOUSE

FLEISHHACKER PLAYGROUND, SAN FRANCISCO

HELEN BRUTON

Helen Bruton, the youngest of the three talented daughters of Daniel Bruton, originally had an ambition to become a sculptor. But when her sister Esther first became interested in the graphic arts; Helen, too, turned her artistic talents to wood-block printing and engraving. Of late years Helen Bruton has become better known for her achievements in mosaic murals, examples of which, in Southern California and in San Francisco, have established her as a noteworthy artist and decorator.

Born in Alameda, Helen Bruton attended that city's public and high schools. Later, at the University of California in Berkeley, she majored in art. Following a short business course in San Francisco, she engaged in war work, enrolling in Washington, D. C., in the Navy Department, with the rank of yoeman. After her stay in Washington, she, with her sisters Esther and Margaret worked in occupational therapy in Letterman Hospital, San Francisco, for the duration of the war.

In 1920, New York City, was the scene of Miss Bruton's art activities. She attended the Art Students' League, where, for a year, she worked under the direction of Stirling Calder and Leo Lentelli, both famous sculptors.

Upon her return to California, she lived for a while in Alameda with the rest of her family. Leaving to join her sister in Monterey, still imbued with the ambition to be a

sculptor. Later, in Monterey, the Bruton's built and furnished a studio house.

EUROPEAN TRAVEL

Europe, with its famous art galleries, exhibitions of paintings and coteries of worthwhile artists, attracted the ambitious Bruton girls. With Margaret and Esther, Helen visited the centers of culture in Europe. All three studied in Paris together. Through a capacity for observation, hard work, and association with contemporary artists, the Bruton girls' artistic abilities broadened in scope and they began to develop distinctive styles each in her own way.

Returning to America, Helen, for a time, turned from sculpture to decorative and architectural design. In 1929, when the vogue for early California-Spanish architecture was at its height, she became interested in designing the faience tile, manufactured by Gladding, McBean and Company of Glendale, California. This firm commissioned her to complete twenty-two panels in faience tile for the Mudd Memorial Library of the University of Southern California. The mosaic panels, on the outside of the library, represent famous philosophers. Her work is a harmonious part of the Mudd Memorial Library which won the award, from the American Society of Architects, for being the best building erected in this country, in that particular year. From private patrons she also received commissions for designs in mosaic

and did much to encourage and develop the art and crafts of mosaic among Pacific Coast tile manufacturers.

In 1929, Helen Bruton, with her sisters Esther and Margaret, following a visit to the Rancho de Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico, where all three sketched and painted, gave an art exhibition in the Beaux Art Gallery, San Francisco. Julius Cravens wrote of her painting capacity in the Argonaut, December 7, 1929:

> "Helen Bruton is showing a collection of decorative linoleum block prints which are in the nature of book illustrations, and most of which she has previously exhibited. They are highly imaginative, amusing, and reveal, in part her great versatility.
>
> "But again in her case, as in that of Esther Bruton, the true creative spirit shines forth with notable strength in one work, the single oil painting which she is showing. This expressionistic canvas, entitled 'Portrait of a Poet,' is a true artistic experiment, and contains that which spells creative energy. The work is somewhat crude, perhaps, technically. But it is one of those rare paintings which one is satisfied not to look for technique, for there is to be found in it a wealth of other equal, if not superior virtues. The work is rendered with extreme simplicity, and is remarkably fine in color. But back of all that it is imbued with that need to be born which breathes life into a work of art and lifts it above the level of 'the grind.'"

WOOD BLOCKS

The critic of the San Francisco Examiner commented on December 1, 1929:

> "Helen Bruton is taller than Esther and a bit more haphazard in her movements. She treats everything in sort of a large way, paying little attention to orderly details. It is entire-

> ly logical that hers should be the woodblocks that form the major part of the smaller room showing. She works with vigorous masses and relies on the strength of the design as a whole to tell what she has to say. She shows three 'Golden Asse' prints, two of which were included in the recent Etcher's Show. She also shows a series of....illustrations. Her 'The Party' received the California Society of Etchers' prize in 1928.
>
> "Helen Bruton has recently been giving much of her time to designing for tiles. A series of panels she has designed have been executed in tile and installed in the Mudd Memorial in the University of Southern California. These panels all deal with some phase of philosophy, or some philosopher, and they were done within the limitations of proscribed subject matter.
>
> "The one painting by Helen Bruton is singularly interesting. It is called 'Portrait of a Poet,' and is decidedly poetic in treatment. The relationship of color in the simplified spots is beautifully handled, to give a definite psychological impression."

This Beaux Art Show was later exhibited at the Bullocks-Wiltshire Galleries in Los Angeles, and then was sent to the Weyhe Gallery in New York.

ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE-MOSAICS

Turning from sculpture for a time, Helen occupied her talents in painting, wood-engraving, in making wood and linoleum block prints and in mosaic designing.

ETCHINGS

She exhibited frequently with the California Society of Etchers, of which she is a member. At the 1931 exhibition, held in San Francisco at Vickery, Atkins and Torrey

Galleries in September, Helen's etching "Soiree," won an Honorable Mention. The San Francisco Chronicle of September 21, 1930 stated:

> "....'Soiree' by Helen Bruton is replete with humor. Skilfully executed, a gathering of the intelligentsia is amusingly brought to attention by the delineation of various types, from the long-haired poet, to the Oriental mystic..."

"Sunday Night," an etching depicting a New York subway scene, received the prize of the California Society of Etchers when exhibited at Vickery, Atkins and Torrey's Galleries in 1931, and also she won honorable mention.

The San Francisco Examiner of September 27, 1931 stated:

> "The annual show by members of the California Society of Etchers, held at Vickery, Atkins and Torrey Galleries, will continue through the coming week. Included among the ninety prints is work that is both individual and significant of the development of local artists.
>
> "This year's award went to Helen Bruton for her dry point, 'Sunday Night.' It is a street car scene, treated with acrid humor. 'Sardonic,' too, is another print by the same artists, who shows herself an excellent draughtsman."

PAINTINGS

When Helen's "Beach Picnic" was shown with the San Francisco painters exhibit with the Los Angeles group, Arthur Millier commented in the Los Angeles Times of October 2, 1932:

> "....Helen Bruton's 'Beach Picnic' is one of the best things here. It is both a good picture and a true comment, touched with her unfailing humor...."

A visit to the old mining town of Virginia City resulted in a number of clever sketches shown in various exhibitions, notably at the Ilsley Galleries of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles in October. She also exhibited with the Progressive California Painters in San Francisco in October 1934, and in a joint exhibition with Margaret and Esther at the Danysh Galleries in San Francisco in January 1935.

The Oakland Tribune of January 13, 1935 commented on Helen's work:

> "....Helen Bruton is exhibiting charcoal drawings, and, no doubt, many other things in other media, but these escape me at the moment. Most of her drawings are of mountain scenes, but I am interested in the first drawing of seven, six not started, depicting the seven ages of woman. The first shows Helen being presented by a nurse to her father. Two little sisters stand by, wondering...."

MURAL PAINTINGS

With her sister Margaret, Helen executed a series of mural paintings to decorate the office building of Borden's Milk Company in San Francisco. These represent a surprising gesture of art patronage by modern industry and set a welcome precedent.

That same year, Helen and her family gypsied across the continent in an old open car. Later she joined her sisters in a journey to old Mexico, where she sketched and painted in Taxco, Mexico City and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The results of this trip are noted in the monograph on Margaret Bruton.

Continuing her interest in murals, in 1933 Helen's design for two mosaic panels for the Loggia of the Mothers' House at Fleishhacker Park and playground was approved as a W. P. A. project, and Margaret and Esther joined her in working on two mosaic panels, 13 by 6 feet. The subjects are "St. Francis" and "Children and their Animal Friends." It is the first tile mosaic in San Francisco to be done by local artists.

CALIFORNIA HISTORY OF FRESCO AND MOSAIC ART

Upon completion of the two mosaic panels at Fleishhacker Park, the San Francisco Examiner of August 5, 1934, had a large illustration of one of the panels in the Sunday Art Section, and Ada Hanifin wrote of the mosaics:

> "Illustrations: 'Children and their Animal Friends,' one of two panels in tile mosaic recently completed in the Mothers' House at Fleishhacker Playground. It is the work of Helen Bruton and her sisters, Esther and Margaret.
>
> "Without the blow of trumpets, there is developing here in the West, specifically in San Francisco, a school of fresco painting and a modern mosaic revival. It was Ray Boynton who started the development of fresco painting, in San Francisco, and not Diego Rivera, as has been widely publicized, and generally accepted.
>
> "Before the Mexican ever set foot in the Stock Exchange, Boynton, an instructor at the California School of Fine Arts and at the University of California, was working in fresco 'from my own curiosity, he told me 'and from 'Cenimo Cannini' as a guide in 1917'....
>
> "The fresco painting and mural decorations in the Coit Tower, sponsored by the P. W. A. brought to light the work of some fifty chosen artists in this field. It is because of that

worthy movement projected by the P. W. A. that the three Bruton sisters had the opportunity to do the two panels (13 feet by 6 feet) in the mosaic facing each other at either end of the Loggia in the Fleishhacker Mother House at the Fleishhacker Playground.

"It is quite probable that Ray Boynton and the Brutons are the only ones, so far in this country, who are attempting to adapt the ancient medium to modern motifs, that is as apart from the accepted technique of the Italians. They treat it as a direct medium, make their own designs, cut their own stone and set the design. In other words, they create in terms of mosaic.

"These two panels in tile mosaic 'St. Francis' and 'Children and their Animal Friends' were designed by Helen Bruton, but her sisters, Esther and Margaret, worked equally hard in their execution as voluntary assistants. The work shows their skilled craftsmanship...."

PORTRAITS

Helen Bruton's portrait, "Rena," shown at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in 1934, was praised by Junius Cravens in the San Francisco News of September 22, 1934. He wrote enthusiastically:

"In the oils section are two especially notable portraits. One is 'Rena' by Helen Bruton. This canvas is significant because it is representative of contemporary figure painting at its best. It is carefully painted. It has charm without cheap sentimentality. It is simple and direct yet handled with restraint. It is intelligently thought out. In short it rings true."

"Helen's Helen," is the caption under a self-portrait of Helen Bruton, illustrating a criticism of the three sisters' exhibit at the Danysh Galleries in San Francisco, published in the Oakland Tribune of January 13, 1935.

ETCHING PRIZE

In January of the same year, the three Bruton sisters exhibited at the show of the California Society of Etchers, regarding which the Wasp-News Letter of January 12, 1935, wrote:

> "....Helen's and Margaret's etchings have been included in several editions of 'Fifty Best Prints of the Year,' a Who's Who of American Etchers. One of the few awards ever given to women etchers by the California Society of Etchers, went to Helen Bruton in 1931."

A reproduction of Helen's mosaic mural appears in the Wasp-News Letter of June 15, 1935, entitled:

> "Mural detail in Mosaic by Helen Bruton, whose work is included in an exhibit by the Society of Mural Artists at the San Francisco Museum of Art in connection with the California Architect's Show."

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA MOSAICS

Helen Bruton's next commission was for mosaic panels to decorate the exterior walls of the University of California Art Gallery in Berkeley. The panels took almost a year for completion. The work was done partly as a Federal Art Project and partly as an Alumnae donation. Albert Bender, San Francisco patron of the arts, donated the materials, and Florence Alston Swift, the artist, collaborated with Helen Bruton in the mosaics. The subject chosen was "The Arts," Helen contributing the panels depicting "Sculpture" and "Dancing," while Mrs. Swift's contribution was "Music" and "Painting."

The Oakland Tribune of November 1, 1936, published a large illustration of the mosaics and commented under the captions, "Large Mosaics Given U. C. to be Dedicated," and "Alameda, Berkeley Women Make Art; Months are Required for Completion":

> "Berkeley, Oct. 31--The two largest mosaics made in this region for the past quarter century were installed on the exterior walls of the University of California Art Gallery this week.
>
> "They were presented to the university formally today.
>
> "The mosaics were made by Miss Helen Bruton of Alameda and Mrs. Florence Swift, 148 Tunnel Road, Berkeley, under a Federal Art Project.
>
> "The larger of the two is 14 feet by 14 in size and is made up of from 80,000 to 99,000 small tile pieces. The smaller is 14 feet by 10½, and has about 60,000 individual pieces.
>
> "The work, which took nine months, was completed a week ago, with installation on the building this week. The mosaics, of colored tile, represent the Arts.
>
> "Tile for the mosaics was cut in long three-quarter-inch strips, and then broken into smaller squares by hand. It was first laid out on a floor for actual composition, and then transferred to the walls by sections pasted on heavy paper.
>
> "Prof. Eugen Neuhaus, custodian of the Art Gallery, officially received the mosaics for the university. The two pieces are the major units of a decoration that will cover most of the front wall of the museum."

Junius Cravens wrote in the San Francisco News of May 6, 1936:

"Helen Bruton and Florence Alston Swift, both of whom are well-known Bay Region artists, have completed designs for two large mural decorations which have been accepted by the Committee on Buildings and Grounds. The mosaics are now being assembled on the front of the University of California Art Gallery, Berkeley.

"The designs are appropriately symbolical of the fine arts, and it is thought that the completed murals will be an outstanding adaptation of the ancient art of mosaic to present-day uses. Having been permanently placed on the building, it is felt that they will be a noteworthy addition to the campus scene.

"A group of artists in the employ of the Federal Art Project are engaged at the intricate task of setting the thousands of small pieces of colored tile of which the mosaics are composed. When completed, the decorations will cover approximately four hundred square feet.

"Funds required for this project have been donated anonymously, it is said, by two alumnae of the University. The tile, which is of Californian manufacture, is being broken into the required sizes by the artists who are working on the project, under the direction of Miss Bruton and Mrs. Swift."

These mosaic panels at the University of California Art Gallery attracted so much attention from the lay public, as well as from art critics, that they were included in the motion picture film made by the Paramount of the Federal Project murals throughout the United States.

Helen's interest in prints still continued, however, and in January 1937, she exhibited with the California Society of Etchers at the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Then the talented artist accepted another commercial commission to execute two mural panels for the lobby

entrance of the Golden State Hotel, in San Francisco, then being remodeled. The subject she chose for one panel is a female figure of a California Indian, symbolic of the "City" and, for the other, a male Indian, representing "Country." The San Francisco News of May 21, 1937 had an illustration of Helen at work on the mosaic panels, and wrote:

> "Free as a Breeze This Girl.
>
> "Helen Bruton Serious about Work, But Untied by 'Musts.'
>
> "Frowning, intent, a slender young woman, clad in smeary blue overalls, soft shirt and sandals, turned up a clear-eyed glance as she knelt before a quarter-finished mosaic.
>
> "'I can't talk to you very much,' said Helen Bruton. 'I have to fight this thing. Sometimes it....makes me....mad!'
>
> "She bent her bandana-bound head. 'Sometimes,' accompanying her words with vigorous pounding to smooth the loose, newly laid tile pieces, 'sometimes I even....get....hysterical.'
>
> "One of the two exterior murals with which Miss Bruton is decorating the entrance to the remodeled Golden State Hotel, has been completed in the six days she and her craftsman, Anthony Falcier, have been working. The second should be finished, she thinks, by the first of next week.
>
> "'They are just symbolic of the west,' she explained. 'They don't tell a story.'
>
> "First modeling, then etching, and now mosaics have held Helen's attention.
>
> "'If anyone tells me I should devote my life to mosaics I'll never do another, I'll do tombstones instead,' she warned. 'I don't like.... any....set things,' she muttered pounding again.

"Miss Bruton did the mosaics for Fleishhacker and for the Berkeley Art Gallery.

"One of the first to use California tile, instead of Venetian porcelain or marble, Miss Bruton believes that mosaics are coming back into deserved popularity."

ILLUSTRATIONS

Prints by all of the Bruton sisters, Margaret, Esther and Helen have been included in several issues of the annual volume known as "Fifty Best Prints of the Year." In March 1931, "Prints," a national magazine, published in New York devoted an article and several illustrations to the work of the three Bruton sisters. A California journal, "Topics," of April 1930 published an article, "Western Wonders," illustrated with prints by all three.

Helen Bruton is a member of the California Society of Etchers, with whom she annually exhibits.

HELEN BRUTON

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

ETCHINGS:

Party, The
Sardonic
Soiree
Sunday Night

MURAL PANELS:

Exterior mural panels, entrance to the Golden State Hotel, San Francisco: one female figure of a California Indian, symbolic of the "City," and one of a male Indian representing "Country."

MOSAIC PANELS:

Mosaic panels depicting "Sculpture" and "Dancing," University of California Art Gallery at Berkeley.

Two Mosaic panels, "St. Francis" and "Children and Their Animal Friends," Loggia of the Mothers' House, Fleishhacker Park and Playground in San Francisco.

FAIENCE TILE PANELS:

Twenty-two panels in faience tile, representing celebrated philosophers of history, in the Mudd Memorial Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

OILS:

Portrait of a Poet
Rena (portrait)

MISCELLANEOUS:

Beach Picnic
Dancing Lesson, The
Helen's Helen (self-portrait)

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

Mudd Memorial Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Twenty-two panels in faience tile, representing celebrated philosophers of history.

University of California Art Gallery, Berkeley, California
Mosaic panels depicting "Sculpture" and "Dancing."

Loggia of the Mothers' House, Fleishhacker Park and Playground, San Francisco, California
Two mosaic panels: "St. Francis" and "Children and Their Animal Friends."

Golden State Hotel, San Francisco, California
Exterior mural panels: one female figure of a California Indian, symbolic of the "City" and one of a male Indian representing "Country."

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California:
Galerie Beaux Arts
Party, The, December 1927
Portrait of a Poet (oil)
Also decorative linoleum blocks

California Society of Etchers
Dancing Lesson, The September 1928
Party, The (First Prize Award)
Soiree (etching; first honorable mention) September 1930
Sunday Night (etching)
Represented 1931
Represented January 1935
Represented January 1937

Vickery, Atkins and Torrey Galleries
Soiree (etching; honorable mention) September 1931
Sunday Night (etching)

California Palace of the Legion of Honor
Rena (portrait in oil) September 1934

Progressive California Painters' Exhibition
Represented October 1934

Danysh Galleries January 1935
Helen's Helen (self-portrait of the artist)
Also charcoal drawings

Society of Mural Artists' Exhibition, San Francisco

San Francisco Museum of Art
Represented June 1935

Los Angeles, California
Bullock's Wiltshire Galleries March 1930
Paintings, drawings, screens and prints

Joint Exhibition, San Francisco-Los Angeles

Artists Groups
Beach Picnic October 1933

Ilsley Galleries, Ambassador Hotel
Sketches of Virginia City, Nevada October 1933

New York City
Weyhe Galleries
Exhibited 1933

AWARDS:

California Society of Etchers, San Francisco
First Prize for "The Party" 1928

California Society of Etchers, San Francisco
First Honorable Mention for "Soiree" 1931
(etching)

CLUBS:

Member:
California Society of Etchers

HELEN BRUTON

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H E L E N F O R B E S

1891..... . . .

Biography and Works

"STUDY FOR MURAL"

LOBBY, POST OFFICE--MERCED, CALIFORNIA

HELEN K. FORBES
CALIFORNIA FRESCO MURALIST

INTRODUCTION

Helen K. Forbes, at the height of her career as an artist, represents many phases of development in California art. Born and reared in the west, her travels and education have been cosmopolitan. She has studied in many European countries and sketched in such climates as Mexico and Morocco. Her courage in the face of new conditions and her natural appreciation of other peoples is a part of her pioneer heritage. Assured that her self-discipline will result in an art that has value to others, she functions freely, fearlessly attacking new media and conquering problems of design within given spaces. Untouched by the necessity for catering to popular approval, her work has attained a high level in the estimation of critics as well as of the public.

Her development from easel to mural painting parallels that of many other San Francisco artists. Her artistic growth has been steady and she has never yielded to the temptation to rest on past triumphs. She has labored in company with the fresco painters who have done group work on civic projects, and as a leading artistic coordinator of several vital murals, her talents have come recognizably to the fore. She has the capacity for restating, in terms of excellent art, those patterns and designs which are the distinctive expres-

sion of the different countries in which she has lived and worked. As a Californian of note in art circles, her works are said to approximate the best standards of world art centers.

EARLY SAN FRANCISCO BACKGROUND

Helen Forbes was born at Scott and Vallejo streets, San Francisco, February 3, 1891. Her ancestry is identified with pioneer San Francisco, for her grandfather, Andrew Bell Forbes, came to California with the Argonauts during the '49 gold rush period. He was an official of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, and his brother, Captain Cleveland Forbes, was the first captain of the first steamer to enter San Francisco Bay. It docked at a point on the early day waterfront which at present is about where Montgomery and Washington streets meet--the section near little Italy and Chinatown, where old warehouses with their studios border on new steel office buildings. This company delivered the first direct mail via Panama.

Andrew Bell Forbes decided to live in San Francisco when Katherine Kester Thompson came West to marry him. She made the adventurous journey with her parents, by steamer to Panama, then by mule across the Isthmus, and again by steamer up the West Coast. In San Francisco, the young couple occupied homes on several hills. It was on famous old Rincon Hill, an early fashionable residential section, that their son, Stanley, Helen's father was born, in 1855.

Andrew Forbes was then connected with the Wells Fargo Express Company and, later, with the Mutual Life Insurance Company. His son, Stanley, entered the same business and, on his father's death, undertook its management. Stanley Forbes married Kate Skells in 1886 and the couple had two daughters, Helen and Florence.

ART EDUCATION

Helen Forbes attended the Grant Grammar School in San Francisco, and did not show any marked artistic talent until she was twelve years old, when the family moved down the Peninsula to Palo Alto, where she attended a private school, which later became the Castilleja School for Girls. Here, she studied with an able teacher and graduated, in 1908, with a scholarship which enabled her to study art for another year.

As San Francisco offered the best art schooling on the Pacific Coast, and Professor Eugen Neuhaus, artist and art historian, advised her to attend the famous Mark Hopkins Art Institute she learned the fundamentals of drawing there. Among her teachers was Frank Van Sloun, the muralist, who conducted classes in composition. After three years of figure and other forms of painting, Helen's work was awarded a scholarship for life in that school, which allows her to study there whenever she chooses. (The Mark Hopkins Art School is now the California School of Fine Arts).

Enlarging on her San Francisco studies, Helen Forbes went to Monterey and Carmel and studied with Armin Hansen, the marine painter. The picturesque seashore landscape, the old Spanish Mission, adobe houses and the Mexican and Portuguese fisherman were her subjects. Her studies under Hansen fired her with ambition to study under the best European masters.

STUDIES FRESCO IN EUROPE

Helen Forbes went first to Germany, to obtain a thorough schooling in draftsmanship, under Professor Groeber of Munich. In the life figure classes she painted on a large scale, drawing the figure full size on six foot canvas. These lessons were invaluable for her later work, when human and animal figures were done in heroic size.

In Germany, she also studied with Professor Max Doerner, who taught fresco painting. She not only learned the art of fresco, but the technique of its application to plaster walls. Miss Forbes has since found pigment and materials, local to California, that are satisfactory for fresco use. Her European fresco training went on at the same time that several of her friends were studying fresco in Mexico City under Diego Rivera. Since then, they have worked together in bringing to the fore a San Francisco school of fresco artists.

Under Professor Mollier, Helen Forbes made a painstaking study of human and animal anatomy, entering the dissection class rooms with a zest for accuracy. She has utilized

this knowledge in her anatomical illustrations for scientific medical journals.

During her last year abroad, Helen Forbes forsook the academic teachers and sought the moderns, such men as Ernst Leyden, in Amsterdam, and Andre l'Hôte, in Paris. She also visited European museums and galleries in the great cities which were filled with contemporary art.

TRAVELS ABROAD

Sometimes she traveled on a bicycle through the picturesque countryside of the continent, again she visited in London, taking in its great museums. After a short sketching tour in Wales, she spent an interval in Florence, Italy, and finally spent a month in Tangiers, Morocco. Her drawings there were brilliant effects patterned from the flat-roofed Moorish houses, the burnoosed natives and the hot sunlight.

Helen Forbes returned to California in 1924 with a fresh viewpoint, improved in skill but still feeling that she was yet only in process of training. She exhibited infrequently but painted seriously until, after two years, she went to Mexico. She found a small mountain mining town, Guanajuanto, very paintable, and later visited Mexico City where she met the world famous mural painter, Diego Rivera. The sketches and paintings resulting from this Mexican visit have been shown in many American galleries. One canvas "Iglesia San Francisco" belongs to the San Diego Museum of Fine Arts.

Her Mexican work showed the development of a new skill, an economy of treatment, and a keen recognition of the sculptural quality she found in the natural and the architectural forms of Mexico. These things she expressed in her own way, uncolored by the Rivera fresco school. Junius Cravens in the Argonaut, April 2, 1927, reports:

> "Having spent six months at painting the pros and cons of Mexican towns and town life, Helen Forbes is exhibiting the results of her labors at the Beaux Arts Galerie....There are twenty-five oil paintings and two drawings. Miss Forbes' work might be described as being 'placid.' She looks upon her subjects coldly, reflecting them literally but completely without emotion, as does the camera. By this we do not mean to imply that her painting is photographic, for it is not that. She simply records a material, impersonal Mexico...."

The Argus, San Francisco, April 15, 1927, carries an article on the same subject by Jehanne Bietry Salinger:

> "Landscapes and Mexican types are the subjects of the paintings exhibited by Helen Forbes at the Beaux Arts Galerie, 116 Maiden Lane, the last ten days. The whole work was accomplished during her recent stay in Mexico and considering how comparatively short her trip has been it represents a splendid effort.
>
> "Her landscapes are well built; there is space and air in them; their lines are good, but they are somewhat empty of genuine emotion. The colors are indifferent and do not tell what Helen Forbes is able to do when she handles a subject which she understands keenly.
>
> "She is much more at home with human material. Her Mexican types are quite realistic and are a splendid example of how this artist can paint when she lets her sensibility guide her brush.
>
> "Helen Forbes has brought back to San Francisco a great deal of true-Mexico."

CALIFORNIA SIERRA TRIPS

All during her childhood, Helen Forbes and her father took camping trips, roving over the High Sierra and absorbing the natural wonders of those mountains. At intervals since, Helen Forbes has painted many California high mountain scenes. The San Francisco Chronicle of April 7, 1929, discusses her watercolor sketches:

> "The walls of the Galerie Beaux Arts are given over to watercolors and oils by three artists from Santa Fe and to watercolors by Helen Forbes. Her twelve watercolors present a fresh aspect of the work of this versatile young San Franciscan. She has taken her sketch box into the Sierra and set down the colorful masses of mountain and valley.
>
> "....She has recorded her enthusiasm with clear, quickly applied color. She has caught the timbre of high altitude, she has been reverent before massive formations of nature. Simple, direct and sincere, these watercolors sustain one's beliefs in Miss Forbes ability."

Again, Junius Cravens in the* Argonaut praises her work:

> "The thing that impresses us, in looking at the watercolors by Helen Forbes,.....is that during the last two years she has hit a definite stride and gained an objective in her work. Her current exhibition deals with the arid wastes of the Mono Lake County, the stark ruggedness of which she has caught and expressed with conviction. Her interpretations are vigorous, albeit at times a bit rigorous, and rendered with a sure brush."

A year later, in the Argonaut of April 5, 1930, Junius Cravens reaches a higher appreciation of her watercolor work:

*See bibliography

"The exhibition of watercolors by Helen Forbes in the main gallery of the Beaux Arts is as refreshing and stimulating as a clear spring day. Miss Forbes has a directness of approach to her work and an honesty of purpose which is apparent throughout the exhibition and her paintings are characterized by a robust individuality.

"One cannot look at them and say, 'The artist has borrowed this trick from Van Gogh, and that one from Cezanne, and another from someone else,' because there is no suggestion of anything in her work that is not her own.

"She never needs to resort to the superficial or the dramatic in order to create a sensational effect, for her art is sufficient unto itself. And yet withal her exhibition is notably lacking in sameness.

"....There is a noble simplicity and sense of bigness in such of her watercolors as 'Under Sea Forms,' 'Vale in Death Valley' and 'Funeral Range,' in contrast to the carefully selective detail which she employs in the more objective landscape, 'Mining Town, Death Valley.'

"....Her various studies of flower, shells and crabs, are vigorous and richly, if quietly, colorful. Among her varied landscapes are three snow scenes which are particularly well handled."

DECORATIVE WATERCOLORS

About this time Helen Forbes found that watercolor was the ideal medium for her development towards fresco and other decoration. Junius Cravens tells of this:

"Her latest watercolors are decorative, influenced by her growing interest in art applied to crafts. Many of her designs would be effective in textiles, in murals, and in other specific decorations. She has shown remarkable progress during the past few months, evolving from the realm of theories into that of realization of her medium and its expression."

In the San Francisco Examiner of April 6, 1930, Gobind Behari Lal says:

> "At the Beaux Arts Gallery exhibition Miss Forbes has excellent craftsmanship. Her choice and application of colors are fluent, astute and often pungent. Nor is the main ingredient of her successful work just the ability to be representative.
>
> "One discerns behind her pencil and brushwork a definite creative purpose. These brilliantly colored and postured cactus leaves and rocks are not only copies of nature. They are idealized designs that parallel the objects of the earth.
>
> "Some of her still-life, the set of flower paintings, orchids, mesembryanthemum and so on, shows Miss Forbes' sympathy with the instinct for sensuous beauty indicated with rich coloring."

Helen Forbes was one of the founders of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, and at their November 1930, annual exhibition won first prize with her oil painting, "Jimson Flower."

DEATH VALLEY SKETCHES

During 1930 and until 1932, Helen Forbes spent short periods in the desert country of Death Valley, California. Her canvas "Twenty-Mule-Team Canyon," painted with the light at highest intensity, was exhibited often. While she was in the valley, she lived in an old deserted inn, sixteen miles from the nearest gasoline filling station. The frenetic forms of the desert and the primitive upheavals of the surrounding mountain ranges gave her startling themes.

Her Death Valley canvases were exhibited in 1932 with a traveling exhibition of "Native American Art" which toured the middle-west and eastern cities.

WESTERN SUBJECTS PREFERRED

Helen Forbes' belief in the value of an indigenous art is found in her choice of western landscape, natural flower and animal forms, and native peoples. One sketching tour was made to the old mining town of Virginia City, Nevada, where the quaint surroundings and inhabitants were exhaustively recorded by the young artist. One of these canvases, "Piute Indian," was acquired by Mills College, Oakland, California.

A retrospective exhibit of her work emphasizing her preference for western subjects is reported in the Berkeley Gazette of December 10, 1931:

> "Helen Forbes is a San Franciscan and a California painter who, after visiting, studying and working in various parts of the country and in foreign lands, believes that California is a sufficient field for an artists' best endeavors. She will show a gallery of her oil paintings, and one of her watercolors at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park for a month.
>
> "A few of the pictures will be retrospective, some painted at Guanajuanto and other parts of Mexico, where she spent six months in 1926; but most will be landscapes of California--Carmel and particularly of Death Valley....The strange forms of hills and rocks of these places are depicted by the artist in a somewhat stylized manner but not of the extreme type. The beauty of the varied cactus forms and flowers are other subjects."

About this time in 1931, Helen Forbes taught in the Art Department of the University of California, in Berkeley. She also accepted several commissions for decorative murals during the late 1920's and early 1930's.

MURAL COMMISSIONS

Interest in architectural decoration, for both exteriors and interiors of buildings, Helen Forbes associated in art work, in 1928, with two young women artists, in Berkeley; Florence Alston Swift and Marian Simpson. This trio's most successful effort was a fresco done over an archway in a private home on Tunnel Road, Berkeley. Her own design for an overmantel is in her family home at 1151 University Avenue, Palo Alto.

She used oil and tempera paint with equal facility and always experimented with fresco. An exterior mural, by Helen Forbes, may be seen below the Coit Tower, on Telegraph Hill, San Francisco. This is on a modernistic white stucco house, on Alta Street, with horizontal bands of flying wild ducks on a yellow background standing out against the blue water of San Francisco Bay.

The three mural artists, also collaborated on a map for the Young Women's Christian Association, on Sutter Street, San Francisco. Their small group was the first of its kind in California, and represented a working guild prophetic of the Public Works of Art Program, in which Miss Forbes is one of the leading spirits.

MURALS UNDER WPA

Since 1934 Helen Forbes has given almost her entire time to great fresco murals, commissions from the United States Government, under the Civic Works of Art Program, now renamed as WPA Projects.

The original sketches for the design for the Fleishhacker Park "Mothers' House" at the Zoo, in San Francisco, were passed by several art committees and the San Francisco Art Commission. Helen Forbes and her friend Dorothy Wagner Puccinelli, designed two of the walls. Their theme was "Noah and His Ark, the Embarkation and Debarkation."

The preliminary studies of animals took about a year of sketching and composing. Helen Forbes read a huge book on "The Animals of the Bible," and then decided to use the models at hand in the nearby zoo. She had to learn to draw animals as they paced in their cages, disdaining to pose; to study them asleep and to visualize them in action in their natural settings. She also went to several western ranches to study certain animals, among them a herd of imported "Sacred Cows." These creatures, normally gentle, had proved resentful of their unfamiliar surroundings and would permit no one on foot to approach them. They were, however, accustomed to being herded by a man in a car. So Miss Forbes followed them about in her automobile, sketching them as they grazed, and moving as they moved, in circles, away from the original position of her sketch.

The first wall of the "Noah's Ark" mural was finished in five months, amid many hazards of scaffolding and lighting. The final work has been in process for about three years, due to other commissions she has had to fulfill, and to changes in architectural plans and in the personnel of her artist-helpers under the Works Program Administration.

MOTHERS' HOUSE MURALS

One year after the completion of the first two walls, the remaining two walls were assigned for design to the same women artists and they continued with their subjects, "The Embarkation and Debarkation," making an entire frieze of animals. The final touches, some lunettes over the doors, were still in process of painting in August 1937.

Junius Cravens, the art critic of the San Francisco News, commented on these fresco murals on February 17, 1934:

> "While local interest has centered around the Coit Memorial Tower, where between 20 and 30 artists have been developing frescoes, less spectacular works have remained more or less unsung. The lounge of the Mothers' House at Fleishhacker Zoo, for instance, is filled with scaffolding over which a small crew of workers has been climbing, executing full-sized preliminary sketches for frescoes.
>
> "Two of the toughest looking hombres in the Mothers' House crew--blue jeans, sweaters and caps--prove to be Helen Forbes and Dorothy Puccinelli, who have collaborated in designing murals for a lounge. The four walls, above some wood paneling, are to illustrate the fanciful Hebraic fable of Mr. Noah and his seagoing zoo. That is, pending Uncle Sam's continued patronage.

> "Except for the darkness, the Mothers' House lounge, because of its design and proportions, is admirably suited for mural decoration. If someone can devise a means of lighting the room, not only so the frescoes can be seen, but also to make the place more inviting, it gives the promise of being the most attractive public room in the city when the Forbes-Puccinelli frescoes are completed."

More detailed description of the Noah's Ark murals appears in another article by Junius Cravens in the San Francisco News of June 16, 1934:

> "After plying trowel and brush during many laborious weeks, Helen Forbes and Dorothy Puccinelli have completed their respective fresco paintings on the two end walls of the rest room of the Mothers' House at the Fleishhacker Playgrounds.
>
> "The subject of both murals is 'Noah's Ark.' The Puccinelli panel represents the building of the ark. The artist has told the story with simplicity and restraint. The patient but inspired labors of the men, overhung by the ominous clouds of a gathering storm, are admirably presented.
>
> "In the Forbes mural, the ark is shown as having come to rest among the hilltops which project out of receding waters. Fowl alone have been used to symbolize the return of footed creatures to land. Some are preening themselves, in huddled groups, on the damp, emerging rocks, while others soar into a lightening sky. Miss Forbes, also, has selected her material with discrimination and used it with taste.
>
> "The two frescoes harmonize perfectly, the painters having suited their work, one to the other, with great success. Their simple color schemes, as well as their designs, are in perfect accord with the architectural elements of the interior.
>
> "....the Mothers' House room promises to be one of the crowning achievements among the projects which were instigated by the PWA (Public Works Administration) in Northern California."

WINS COMPETITION FOR POST OFFICE MURAL

In open competition with a hundred other California artists, Helen Forbes submitted the prize-winning design for decoration in the Merced Post Office, an inland California town. The commission was awarded under the PWA section of the Treasury Department. Dorothy Puccinelli was again associated with Helen Forbes in carrying out the work on this decorative scheme. A reproduction of the original sketch appears in Volume I of "Art in Federal Buildings," 1934-1936, by Edward Bruce and Forbes Watson. The comparison with other recent nation-wide historical murals is very favorable.

The mural depicts "Jedekiah Smith Crossing the Merced River," and appears in the photograph which illustrates this monograph.

Helen Forbes' design is aptly suited to fresco technique drawing. It shows strong sympathy with the subject, rhythmic line and balance of tones. Action is admirably suggested in the three groups of men and horses moving across the river from left to right. The figures, synchronizing with the foreground rocks and the mountains in the background, are as perfectly related to the structure of the doorway beneath as to the effect of the wall as a whole, and the final result is bold and vigorous in color, line and emotion.

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

Other types of work by Miss Forbes are among permanent collections in California. Two interesting portraits

in tempera are owned by the San Francisco Museum of Art. They are "Portrait of James Arkatoff" and "Portrait of Isaac Sterne."

At the Sacramento State Fair, in 1934, her "Storm in Death Valley," won the First Prize, a popularity vote by the general public. Another award was First Prize in the 1934 annual of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists for her watercolor of a mining town scene, "Roundhouse Under Snow."

THE ARTIST'S PHILOSOPHY

Miss Forbes is a member of the "National Society of Mural Painters," and was active in the now defunct "San Francisco Mural Society." She is a past president of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists and furthered the development of the Palo Alto Art Club. Her membership in the Co-operative galleries, the Club Beaux Arts and the San Francisco Art Center, include her in the roster of advanced and reorganized modern San Francisco artists.

Helen Forbes has mastered the technical skills of many media from etching to mural decoration, and she has an admirable facility for restating in terms of design those subjects that stir her perceptions. With each development in her artistic career she has consistently built on her experience. She has grown from her individual success to a point where she can work with others in the production of art, bring to her work a new enthusiasm as the result of cooperation with other artists.

A few excerpts from her press comments reveal her tendencies. Junius Cravens in the San Francisco News of May 26, 1934, says:

> "Miss Forbes proves that watercolor is no longer the poor orphan among painting media. In rendering it, she seems to be able to completely divorce herself from habits of the oil palette, and to use only those refreshing qualities which belong uniquely to the more liquid medium."

Cravens also comments on her approach to design:

> "Though Miss Forbes' interpretation of her subjects is sufficiently realistic to suit the most exacting academic taste, she in no wise sacrifices design for photographic accuracy.
>
> "She employs a selective discrimination which enables her to omit non-essentials without jeopardizing truthfulness. She does not have to depart from nature in order to achieve design, because she finds sufficient pattern in each subject that she undertakes to depict. Consequently her work unrolls a thoroughly artistic but faithful panorama of the mining town scene without encroaching upon the realm of the camera."

Glenn Wessels, in the Argonaut of June 1, 1934, comments:

> "Helen Forbes' conservative modernism is exemplified in her paintings of the historic, dead towns of the days of '49, now at the Art Center. She is above all a careful, sensitive and skillful designer and accomplishes just what she sets out to do....here is a quiet sincerity and competence."

The San Francisco Chronicle of June 11, 1933, says:

> "Most of the watercolors by Helen Forbes on display at the Art Center....were done recently in Death Valley. The very name of the place calls forth a picture of breathless, thirsty heat, alkaline waterholes and bones whitening in the sun.

> "....But rather than the atmospheric or legendary quality of the spot, Helen Forbes sees there an endless variety of pattern and color. A snowstorm blotting out the peaks of purple mountain; copper and iron, piles of sulphur, the gray of sterile earth, or patches brilliantly dyed by rich mineral deposits--black, poisonous green and rusty brown--all these twist and heap and interlace into marvelous patterns for her.
>
> "Even more interesting than the Death Valley scenes is a small group done of Point Bonita, on the Marin side of the Golden Gate.
>
> "The gem of these is 'Lighthouse on the Rocks.' The clean, white, red-roofed lighthouse is built firmly on tall black cliffs that have enough weight and substance to stand against the sea. The water is simply done, a clear blue wash that conveys the perfectly tremendous power and 'life of the sea'....the simplicity and strength of this wash characterizes all her work which is refreshingly spontaneous and direct."

Helen Forbes' philosophy includes considerable emphasis on the necessity for excellence in tools and materials. She will sacrifice rigorously to insure enduring results in her murals. She is tireless in research, studying the components of her Western scene, particularly the living details of fauna and flora, with a thoroughness which will accept nothing less than perfection. Cosmopolitan in attitude, she has achieved an admirable adaptability in her observation of life, be it the structural patterns of the city or the immensities of open country, and this she uses to advantage in her mural decorations, fitting her subject surely to her allotted space.

She feels that there exists a definite type of art on the Pacific Coast which it is the business of herself and

her contemporaries to develop. The current efforts of the Federal Government in its sponsorship of art she believes to be of utmost importance in this respect, especially in the opportunities it has afforded the younger artists. This belief she has put into active practice, hopeful that the civic mural decorations, which have appeared as a result of CWA, PWAP, and kindred government projects, will develop increasingly better taste and higher art understanding in the general public. And when the historian turns to appraise the personalities who shared in the building of that type of civic art which characterizes this period of American development, the muralist, Helen Forbes, will be recorded as one of its most active exponents.

HELEN K. FORBES

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

OILS:

California Landscape
Evening
Jimson Flower
Manley's Beacon
Mesa Land
Mine Dumps, Gold Hill
Miss America
Outcropping Rock
Storm, Death Valley

PORTRAITS:

Birdie O'Rourke
Caroline
Piute Indian

STILL-LIFES:

Flowers
Magnolia Blossoms
Tulips

TEMPERA:

Isaac Sterne, Violinist
Jimmie Arkatoff
Old Fort Mason

WATERCOLORS:

After the First Rain
Autumn
Black Mountain Range
Clouds in the Desert
Deserted Mine
Farm, The
Hills and Sea
In the Orchard
Martyr, The
Monterey Morning
Roundhouse Under Snow

Stormy Day, A
Striped Mountain
Twenty-Mule-Team Canyon
Zinnias

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS:

Decoration in tempera of the office of Dr. Eloesser, 490 Post Street, San Francisco, California

Overmantel in oil and breakfast room in tempera in the Forbes residence, Palo Alto, California

Exterior Mural, house on Alta Street, San Francisco, California

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

San Francisco Museum of Art
Jimmie Arkatoff (tempera)
Isaac Sterne, Violinist (tempera)

Y.W.C.A., San Francisco, California
9' x 12' Mural in oil and Map of San Francisco, done in cooperation with Marian Simpson

Mills College, Oakland, California
Piute Indian (portrait)

San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, California
Iglesia San Francisco

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California:
San Francisco Institute of Art
Represented — April 1913
Represented (Delta Nu Honor Society Award) — May 1914
De Young Memorial Museum
Bay Scene — 1915
Exposition Sketch
Cemeteries
Exposition Sketch — 1916

Palace of Fine Arts
Roberta — December 1917
Represented — April 1918
The Martyr (Honorable Mention) — April 1919

San Francisco Art Association
- Roberta — February 1918
- Still-Life — May 1918
- Decoration
- Autumn (Watercolor)
- In the Orchard (Watercolor)
- A Landscape "
- Monterey Morning " — March 1919
- Zinnias "
- Hills and Sea "
- The Martyr "
- The Farm "
- A Stormy Day "
- After the First Rain "
- On a Gray Day
- The Girl in the Orchard
- Reflections
- 56th Annual Exhibition — 1924
- Mine Dumps, Gold Hill (Oil)
- Miss America (Oil)
- Old Fort Mason (Tempera)
- Rhododendrons (Honorable Mention) — 1926
- Iglesia Los Hospitales — 1927
- The Palace, Cuernavaca
- Hillside, Guanajuato
- Banana Palms
- Evening (Oil) — April 1928
- Outcropping Rock (Oil) — April 1929
- A Vale in Death Valley — May 1930
- Twenty-Mule-Team Canyon
- Cactus
- Shore Crab Enlarged
- Undersea Forms
- Black Mountain Range (Watercolor) — May 1931
- Twenty-Mule-Team Canyon "
- Deserted Borax Mine "
- Striped Mountain "
- Clouds in the Desert "
- Mt. Blanco, Windy Day "
- Mesa Land (Oil) — 1932

San Francisco Society of Women Artists
- Reit im Winkl — May 1926
- Birdie O'Rourke (Portrait) — November 1928
- Jimson Flower (Oil) First Prize Award — November 1930
- Twenty-Mule-Team Canyon
- Musician
- Storm, Death Valley — November 1933
- Roundhouse Under Snow (Watercolor)
- First Prize Award — December 1934
- Wells Fargo Ruin

Galerie Beaux Arts

Monterey Wharf	September 1925
Dachan	December 1925
Flowers (still-life)	
Village of the Tyrol	April 1926
Village	
Dachan	
Polka Dots	March 1927
Composition	
Disagreeable Lady	
Mexican Girl	
Yellow House	
Sunset at Cuernavaca	
Twelve watercolors of Mono Lake	April 1927
Boats	June 1929
Storm on the Point	September 1929
Bees	November 1929
Shore Crab	
Cactus	
Under Sea Forms	April 1930
Vale in Death Valley	
Funeral Range	
Mining Town, Death Valley	
Sunny Morning	
Summer	
Cow	
Caroline (portrait study)	February 1931
Locomotive at Ryan	March 1931
Against the Rock	June 1931
Desert Bloom	October 1931

California Palace of the Legion of Honor

Before the First Rain	December 1931
After the First Rain	
Tulips (still-life)	
Derailed Train	
Deserted Borax Mine	
A Vale in Death Valley	
From Carmel Point	
Magnolia Blossoms (still-life)	July 1932

Art Center

Death Valley	June 1933
Lighthouse on the Rocks	
Iris	August 1933

Gump's Gallery

Represented	November 1932
Represented	March 1935

San Francisco Museum of Art — January 1936
Old Fort Mason
Mine Dumps

Berkeley, California
Hotel Claremont Art Galleries — April 1926

Los Angeles, California
Los Angeles Museum of Fine Arts — 1932
One-Man Show (Oils)

San Diego, California
San Diego Museum of Fine Arts — 1932
One-Man Show (Oils)

Sacramento, California
California State Fair — September 1934
Storm, Death Valley (First Prize, Oil)

Oakland, California
Mills College Art Gallery — July 1934
Julia) Gifts od Dr. Hana Barkan,
Piute Indian) San Francisco--in the permanent collection.

Oakland Municipal Art Gallery
Furnace Creek — March 1937

Munich, Germany
Glaspalast — 1932
California Landscape (Oil)

AWARDS:

School of Design, San Francisco Art Institute — 1914
Delta Nu Honor Society Award for best work in composition or illustration

Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco — 1919
Honorable mention for "The Martyr"

San Francisco Art Association (48th Annual) — 1926
Honorable mention for "Rhododendrons"

San Francisco Society of Women Artists
First Prize for "Jimson Flower" (Oil) — 1930
First Prize for "Roundhouse Under Snow" (Watercolor) — 1934

California State Fair, Sacramento, California — 1934
First Prize for "Storm, Death Valley" (Watercolor)

CLUBS:

Member:
Art Center, San Francisco
Palo Alto Art Club
San Francisco Art Association
San Francisco Society of Women Artists
(President 1927)
San Francisco Mural Society
National Society of Mural Painters
Faculty, University of California Art Department,
1931

HELEN K. FORBES

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July 24, 1932--November 27, 1932
August 6, 1933--November 26, 1933
March 11, 1934--June 3, 1934
September 9, 1934--December 2, 1934
December 23, 1934--January 27, 1935

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November 28, 1931--December 10, 1931

Berkeley Gazette, Berkeley, California
December 10, 1931--November 3, 1932

Richmond Banner, Richmond, California
December 11, 1931

Albany Enterprise, Albany, California
December 23, 1931

Carmel Carmelite, Carmel, California
April 23, 1931

Carmel Pine Cone, Carmel, California
July 22, 1932

Wasp, San Francisco, December 8, 1917, p. 23
April 27, 1918, p. 16--April 12, 1919
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*From the Artist's Notebook, undated.

E D I T H H A M L I N

1902..... . . .

Biography and Works

"MURAL DECORATION"

MISSION HIGH SCHOOL--SAN FRANCISCO

EDITH HAMLIN

Well to the fore among women artists in San Francisco, is Edith Anne Hamlin. She is both interested and successful in fresco mural painting. Her works are distinguished by a sensitivity to design, color and form. She is noteworthy as a pioneer in her decorative treatment of American desert subjects, which she presents through various media.

A few years ago Miss Hamlin and some of her friends, revived the use of the "textile mural," or, as it is known in Europe, the "toile peinte." These murals were the result of the better interior decorators' revolt against so called art --spurious easel paintings of the past and poor ultra-modernism. It was about 1920 that these arbiters of good taste decreed blank walls rather than a clutter of inharmonious pictures. However, Edith Hamlin and her associates realized that California homes needed warm color treatment for large wall spaces, and the development of painted fabric hangings wasthe result.

Miss Hamlin's idea is to allow the basic tone of her fabric to determine the key of her painting with opaque and transparent glazes in a technique which she has developed to meet her needs. Whether her design be dramatic and rugged, or poetic and pastoral her painting remains a faithful translation of what she sees in nature.

Edith Anne Hamlin, born June 23, 1902, is the second child of Charles Francis Hamlin and Mary Wallace Hamlin. Like her father and mother, Edith Hamlin is a native Californian. The young Hamlins, Edwin, Edith, Helen and Laurel, grew up in the cultural atmosphere of their parents' home in Oakland. Their father is a musician, teacher and composer and an amateur painter whose work has been exhibited from time to time with the San Francisco Art Association. Mrs. Hamlin's special interests were music, literature and dramatic art. The children received musical instruction from their father who often took Edith on sketching expeditions with him and instilled in her mind an appreciation of form, light and color. Edwin is a cellist; and Helen and Laura, both married, are amateur musicians.

GENEALOGY

In the pleasant Hamlin home the elders often talked family history. The children heard of an English ancestor, also named Hamlin, who had come from Europe with a company of French Huguenots, settled in the Carolinas and fought in the Revolutionary War, and of other Scotch, English and Irish forbears. To the ears of the children, the life of Grandfather Lincoln Hamlin became familiar; his birth in Maine; his service with the Union Army and Navy during the Civil war; of how, in 1866, he sailed round the horn to San Francisco; and became a shoe merchant in Santa Cruz, where he lived for many years. There was talk too, of Grandmother

Mary Wyman Hamlin, a Canadian by birth. Books left to his son, Charles Francis, are evidence that the elder Hamlin had a deep interest in literature.

Edith Hamlin's maternal ancestors were of Scotch descent. Leaving Virginia and Kentucky the Wallaces had pioneered in Missouri, where Grandfather and Grandmother had courted and married. The children liked to hear from Grandfather James Thomas Wallace of his enlistment in the Confederate Army. Besides being an army officer he had been a college graduate and an educator. Coming overland to California, he taught sciences at the California College in Oakland --a small Baptist foundation in those days. Edith feels indebted to her Grandfather Wallace, whose talks aroused in the child an interest in botany, astronomy and geology, and the art of gentle living.

EARLY EDUCATION

With surroundings such as Edith Hamlin enjoyed, the public schools merely supplemented the education she received at home. In 1914, because of Mr. Hamlin's ill health, the family moved to Santa Cruz, where Helen attended High School and on the whole liked the classes in design, but was impatient under the academic method governing art teaching. About this time, coached by her father, she made a number of charcoal landscape drawings. Then she was presented by a Santa Cruz art society with a scholarship which enabled her

to attend the California School of Fine Arts for two years. Serious work won for her three more consecutive years of scholarships. After the second year she found it increasingly difficult to work in classes and sought personal direction and others' viewpoints. The necessity of earning her living added complications. Her mind was divided between art and acquiring bread and butter.

ART EDUCATION

The high peak of her art education in San Francisco was reached when she received permission to paint a mural on the wall of the school gallery. Hers was one of four designs based on the elements, and she depicted Fire in the Allegory of Prometheus. It was her first attempt at egg tempera. In 1924 Miss Hamlin left the art school and set up a studio, dividing her time between a paid craft job and painting furiously on her own. That year, three of her paintings were accepted by the San Francisco Art Association for their annual exhibition.

Following this period of hard work her health broke down, resulting in an enforced rest of five months in a sanitarium in Marin County. To her way of thinking this time was not unprofitable. She found the experience of living with a group at the cross roads of life stimulated her interest in people and revealed to her a totally new viewpoint on life and art.

After a further convalescence in Sonoma Mountains, she began to paint again. She returned home and had a discouraging physical set-back. At the invitation of a friend she went to San Diego, where her health improved to such an extent that she went on sketching trips in the mountains and arid back country. From these trips was born a new sense of design, color, light, and form. Her art was stimulated by new subject matter; health was gradually regained by long hours spent out-of-doors.

TEACHING AND COMMISSIONS

The real beginning of her professional art life was in 1928, when she conducted classes in art for children and maintained a large studio in Balboa Park, San Diego, California. She was commissioned to do many decorative screens and paintings. Also, Miss Hamlin began to exhibit in solo shows and group exhibitions. Health and self-confidence had returned. The San Diego Tribune in 1928 reports on her exhibit:

> "Edith A. Hamlin, who was trained for her art in the San Francisco region, and who is now living in San Diego, has an exhibition of her recent work at the Little Gallery. The work is decidedly strong, colorful and interesting --and much of it attractive....oils, pastel, charcoal, also monotype and woodcut prints. It includes easel pictures, decorative panels, screens....
>
> "....Screens are among her finest exhibits. One is of heavy green foliate cactus forms on a screen whose leaves are 'stepped-up,' the highest being the center.

> "The second, also of several panels, is still more fascinating, with its Marmoset white monkeys with their amusing little white faces, and picturesque heron with banana trees and other semi-tropical scenery conventionalized into a background."*

CACTI THEMES

About this time the United States became "cactus-conscious," from New York window-boxes to elaborate gardens on the Pacific Coast. Edith Hamlin's decorative cactus motifs were in line with the vogue. The San Diego Tribune sounds her praise:

> "Near her cactus screen, in the Little Gallery, she has a series of cactus pictures, with pink blossoms, translucent in the warm southern sunshine. John W. Snyder's worthwhile cactus garden at El Prado in this city, is the theme for another recent picture.
>
> "The desert with zones of brown, yellow and grey-violet sands canopied by a pearl-grey sky is another great favorite....Her desert--is the real desert--masculine, virile; dramatic but attractive because so full of color.
>
> "Miss Hamlin ....has a creative, aesthetic way of working with a manner of expression which is appealing to more than a few, and which is ordinarily more attractive than the similarly artistic work of other progressive contemporaries."*

The San Diego Sun clipping from Edith Hamlin's scrap book for 1929 also praises her art:

> "El Prado Gallery is hung with an exhibition of wall hangings by Edith Hamlin. Most of these decorations are made on cloth and are ideally adapted to the informal California home walls. The colors give a note of strength ....In subject material a bit of out-of-doors has been brought into the house. Many are

*See Bibliography

suggestive of broad spaces, as the cactus and century plant. Miss Hamlin is never tedious, but always frank and broadly decorative in her work, whether it be paintings or prints."*

The San Diego Union comments:

"Among her hangings are desert notes in subtle painting. Her screens define symbolic bits of the tropics and desert. The trees and flowers hereabouts have served as models for a group of interesting pastels and drawings. In these mediums Miss Hamlin shows a very definite departure in that her use of line, pattern and color is simple and peculiarly decorative. Her blockprints have equally individual touches, and are boldly, yet reservedly conceived....One feels the sincere desire to express through her creative art the realism and beauty of our present day world. Ray Boynton, Lee Randolph, Gottardo Piazzoni and Rudolph Schaeffer, all of San Francisco, were among her instructors."*

Edith Hamlin received an honorable mention and several awards in Southern California exhibitions. A solo show of her work was in the La Jolla Library during September, previous to her departure for New York in 1929.

SAN FRANCISCO EXHIBITIONS

The same year, while still living in San Diego, Miss Hamlin kept in touch with San Francisco exhibitions by sending her works to the East-West Gallery in the Western Women's Club, the San Francisco Art Association Annual and also that year's annual of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists. Her painted textiles won praise and acquired many imitators. Her "Castor Plant" received an award, while sales and orders for painted hangings came fast.

*See Bibliography

Works shown in San Francisco appeared in an exhibition in San Diego at the El Prado Gallery. An issue of The San Diego Sun, in May 1929 reported:

> "Since coming to San Diego two years ago, Miss Hamlin has made astonishing progress with her output of block prints, wall hangings and decorative screens. The inspiration for her most interesting work has been found in the semi-tropical plants of the desert, in the native animal life, and in the zoo.
>
> "Her newest screen, a monumental design covering five panels and totaling over ten feet in length, breathes of the desert and while not attempting to invade the realm of paint perspective, gives an uncanny hallucination of space and distance. The blue mountain of the background is as big as all out-doors and the cacti in the foreground rise against it crowned with a halo of light."*

CROSS COUNTRY TRIP

In 1929, with four hundred dollars saved, Edith Hamlin departed for New York and made her first acquaintance with the vastness of the United States by leisurely motor travel across the continent, sketching at halts along the Columbia River, in Yellowstone Park, the Teton Rockies, the Canadian lake shore and down the Hudson River. She arrived in New York with no connections and a month later came the financial crash which rocked the whole country.

She spent over three years in New York, doing free lance decorating and teaching. Her work in several exhibitions at the Art Center led to her appointment as an art

*See Bibliography

teacher in the Ethical Culture School, under Peppino Margravite, painter-supervisor of art. The work was made interesting by the noisy, varied races of city-bred children who were her pupils. She also taught art at a summer camp for girls in the White Mountains, New Hampshire.

The New York Times in February 1930 says of her work:

> "Edith Hamlin, whose mural hangings already have been received with favor here, is exhibiting at the Art Center, a group of both her paintings and textile panels. Motivation of much of her work comes from the desert country of lower California where she has made a close study of the flora and fauna before introducing them into her wall designs. Miss Hamlin uses such symbols as the spiny cactus and other indigenous plant and animal species with considerable originality and with a good sense of decoration."*

Other New York galleries which presented her work, included the Brownell-Lambertson Galleries, Gimbel's and the "Opportunity Gallery" of the Art Center.

SUMMER TRIP SOUTH AND WEST

In the summer of 1930, Edith Hamlin went by steamer to New Orleans and traveled west across the Southwest desert country to visit her family in California. On her return to New York for her fall teaching sessions, she stopped and sketched in Santa Fe and its environs. Here she gained new perception of the artistic value of western natural forms and Indian art and culture which she taught at the Ethical

*See Bibliography

Cultural School. She also studied, taking two courses at Columbia Teachers' College; "Child Psychology" and "Teaching of Art," and made little journeys to many eastern cities, visiting museums and galleries.

She found that her many activities kept her from her own work and decided to leave New York and her classes and go west again. In 1932 she started in a "flivver" and camped and explored less traveled routes through Virginia, Kentucky, the lower midwest to the Rockies, and thence to Taos, New Mexico, where, with some friends, she rented an Indian adobe ranch house on the reservation. Again, she made notes of the scenery and motifs of the Indian country; visiting the inter-tribal dances at Gallup; detouring into the Hopi country.

She had sent works to San Francisco and San Diego exhibitions while in Taos, New Mexico. The Oakland Tribune, early in 1932, records an Indian theme she exhibited:

> "That highly entertaining exhibition now showing at the Galerie Beaux Arts, San Francisco, is called an 'Exhibition of Decorative Arts.' It includes many things from tin flowers to triptychs and terra cotta heads. Everything shown is good, but there are certain items that please the fancy more than others.
>
> "Take, for instance, the large wall hangings by Edith Hamlin, which are as interesting as tapestries. These hangings are oil paintings on rep. The paint has been so carefully handled that most of the hangings appear to be weavings in color, rather than painted cloth.
>
> "This is particularly true of 'After Rain, Taos,' a lovely study, mainly in rich reds and

> browns....square Indian houses of the southwest, the single running streak of water....an Indian in a white robe, or shall we say blanket? A quiet, dignified decoration."*

CALIFORNIA EXHIBITIONS

In addition to her San Francisco exhibitions, Miss Hamlin showed a group of panels at the Fine Arts Gallery in San Diego, and at the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park, California, while her show at the Stendahl Galleries in Los Angeles brought interesting comment in the Los Angeles Times of February 5, 1933:

> "Interior decorators should see her exhibit for here is something genuine in a field ordinarily choked with mediocre copying of old paintings.
>
> "Miss Hamlin's decorations are based on a careful study of western birds, plants, animals and people. She is well trained and her works have the poetry only possible to original thought and feeling.
>
> "Who could miss the Big Sur character in 'Roan Stallion,' and how fresh are the domestic beasts in 'Taos Pastorale.'
>
> "Her work has met with success in New York. The San Diego Fine Arts Gallery purchased several of her hangings for its permanent collection."

Her sales were encouraging and her solo show at the De Young Museum, San Francisco, in May and June 1933, was accorded such interest that she decided to leave the family home in Santa Cruz and establish her residence in San Francisco.

*See Bibliography

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The execution of several commissions for murals in private homes led to her inclusion in the Coit Tower mural artists' group, a Public Works of Art Project, the first in San Francisco. She was assigned poor space for her murals, but gained valuable fresco experience and learned the value of co-operative work. Her spaces are over the doorways in the elevator entry and she considers them a "tour de force."

During the Coit Tower work, Edith Hamlin met Albert Barrows, another San Francisco artist, and they were married in January 1934. The succeeding year was filled with study, small commissions and life in a picturesque old studio on Montgomery Street, with outing and painting trips to the High Sierra country and a remote Carmel Valley ranch.

In April of 1936 the artist couple were divorced. Edith Hamlin threw her energies into mural decoration and welcomed the opportunity to express her talents on large wall spaces, working on the Federal Art Project. Her first commission for the Government was for the San Francisco Mission High School. The San Francisco News of October 10, 1936 comments:

> "The presentation of a mural painted by Edith Hamlin of San Francisco, with its unveiling last night at the Mission High School Library, was a significant part of the 160th anniversary of the founding of the Mission Dolores.
>
> "Joseph A. Danysh, regional director of the Federal Art Project, presented the painting and it

was formally accepted by Mrs. A. S. Musante of the San Francisco Art Commission."

MISSION DOLORES MURAL

A portion of the mural illustrates this monograph. The San Francisco News of a later date gives further description of it:

"The mural is a fresco-secco or egg tempera, painting. It shows the Mission at is founding, with the various types of California Indians preparing adobe bricks, hauling materials in the primitive wooden carts, crushing shells for lime, grinding color for the inside decorations.

"Miss Hamlin and her two assistants, Jay Riesling and Anne Medalie, made a careful research of the various Indian types, including the Southern California tribes, North California Indians, and the very primitive 'digger' Indians.

"There are portraits of Father Junipero Serra, Father Palou, the patron saint of San Francisco and founder of the Mission, and of Father Caubon his assistant.

"The mural is painted in warm, subdued color, since it is situated in the school library. An inscription across the top in gold letters reads: 'Mission San Francisco de Asis, founded by Father Palou on October 9th, 1776--The present church built by Fathers Palou and Caubon in 1782-91.

"Miss Hamlin will paint another mural on a second wall of the library. Its subject matter will include activities inside the completed mission during its golden era, and will chronicle the arts and crafts carried on within the mission at that time."*

Paramount Pictures news films made a reel of the artists at work on this mural decoration.

In her comments on these murals Edith Hamlin expressed friendly gratitude to Maynard Dixon, the celebrated western painter, for his "invaluable help in mural development" and technical approach to larger themes and spatial problems. She also states, "I chose local history of the region, the fusing of two races and civilizations under the Mission system as carried on at Mission Dolores. It is gratifying to feel that one's artistic contribution is a vital and necessary factor in the life of the people. I have a sense of taking part in an important national cultural and social movement."

CURRENT COMMISSIONS

The same dignity of design and thoroughness of research that Edith Hamlin evolved for her easel art and her wall-hangings she has transferred to her mural designs. She is today at the new level in her art which denotes sound foundation and sure vision. The Treasury Department, on the basis of her sketches submitted for government building murals, has commissioned her to do the Post Office murals at Tracy, the San Joaquin Valley, California.

Because she believes that "simplicity and order are most essential to one's state of mind, to produce art," she lives on Telegraph Hill, in a studio which is as simple as a seaside cottage. To the south her windows, with a gay garden below, overlook the skyscrapers of San Francisco; to

the west, Russian Hill; to the north, the Golden Gate and the bay, with bare California hills across the water.

In the past months she has had a real sense of art accomplishment, and on the completion of the Mission murals began to feel that she was making important strides in her own personal direction. Her work is valuable as a record of historical patterns, for the early Spanish and Indian life are fast fading. Her way of work is timely, for the "group decorators" of modern days have come to stay, and art is becoming increasingly a cooperative affair.

The ambitious young artist may well consider the character and personality of Edith Hamlin as evidenced in her capacity to adjust herself to conditions; to adventure, to explore, and to triumph over discouraging set-backs. These hardy virtues are indispensable to the successful career of the artist of today--and tomorrow.

As this volume goes to press, word reaches the California Art Research Project that on September 7, 1937, Edith Hamlin and Maynard Dixon were married in Carson City, Nevada, where they will spend a few months before returning to San Francisco.

EDITH ANNE HAMLIN

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

DECORATIVE WALL HANGINGS:

Afterglow (mural textile in oil)
After Rain, Taos
Candles of the Desert
Desert Garden
Lotus Blossoms
Night-Blooming Cereus
Roan Stallion
Taos Pastorale

MURALS:

Mission High School, San Francisco
Two murals, 6' x 24,' painted in tempera:
"The Building of the Missions (1784)" (1936)
"The Teaching of the Padres (1790-1806)" (1936)

Mrs. Charles N. Felton residence, San Francisco
Sierra decorations in oil glazes (1934)

FRESCOES:

Coit Tower, San Francisco
"Hunting in California"

MISCELLANEOUS:

Castor Plant, The (still-life)
Indian Boy (portrait)
Indian Girl "
Wood-cut
Reclining Girl

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS:

Mrs. Charles N. Felton residence, San Francisco
Sierra decorations in oil glazes (1934)

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

San Diego Museum of Fine Arts
A drawing and a pastel (gifts of the artist)
Three mural textiles (gifts of a donor)

Mission High School, San Francisco
"The Building of the Missions (1784)" (mural in tempera)
"The Teaching of the Padres (1790-1806)" (mural in tempera)

Coit Tower, San Francisco
"Hunting in California" (fresco)

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California
San Francisco Art Association
Three paintings 1924
Represented 1925
Represented 1929
Represented 1935

San Francisco Society of Women Artists
Prints May 1926
Paintings, drawings and wood-blocks November 1926
Castor Plant, The (still-life)
Wood-cut November 1928
Represented 1933

Galerie Beaux Arts
Afterglow (mural textile in oil) October 1932
After Rain, Taos
Represented May 1933
Represented 1935

De Young Memorial Museum
Candles of the Desert April 1933
Desert Garden
Lotus Blossoms
Night-Blooming Cereus

Gelber-Lilienthal's Gallery
Decorative panels painted on fabric February 1935

Art Center
Paintings March 1935
Magnolias May 1935
Also a number of drawings

San Francisco Museum of Art
Decorative Designs — June 1935
Indian Boy (portrait) — July 1936
Indian Girl "

California Palace of the Legion of Honor
Represented — 1935

Oakland, California
Mills College Art Gallery
One-man Show — April 1934

Berkeley, California
Berkeley Women's City Club
One-man Show — 1935

Los Angeles, California
Stendahl Galleries
One-man Show — February 1933
Roan Stallion
Taos Pastorale

San Diego, California
Fine Arts Gallery
One-man Show — 1926

Little Gallery
Oils, pastels, charcoals and wood-cut prints — 1928

El Prado Gallery
Wall hangings and screens — 1928

New York City
Brownell-Lambertson Galleries
Represented — 1930
" — 1931
" — 1932

Art Center
One-man Show — 1931

Delphic Studios
Represented — 1931

Arden Studios
One-man Show 1932
One-man Show 1933

Salon of America
Represented 1932

Texas Circuit:
Texas State College for Women, Denton
Carnegie Public Library, Fort Worth
Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas
White Memorial Museum, San Antonio

CLUBS:

Member:
California Society of Mural Artists
San Francisco Art Center

EDITH ANNE HAMLIN

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*Exact dates of these excerpts from the artist's scrap book are not available.

R U T H B A R R O W S C R A V A T H

1902. . . . . .

Biography and Works

"MOTHER AND INFANT"

PROPERTY OF THE ARTIST

RUTH CRAVATH

California art circles of the present day give generous recognition to the name of Ruth Cravath, sculptor and painter of note. To be the possessor of a "Cravath," as she signs her work, is felt by her patrons to be a mark of distinction. And not only is Ruth Cravath a creator, but a capable teacher as well, whose talent for interpretation, integrity and understanding have done much to develop local art.

Although, for professional reasons, she uses her maiden name, she is the wife of Sam Bell Wakefield III and the mother of twins--a girl and boy.

GENEALOGY

Her parents were middle-Western Americans by birth, their ancestry English and old New York Dutch. Her father, James Raney Cravath, came from Grinnell, Iowa, where Ruth later attended college, and her mother, Ruth Myra Rew, from Illinois.

James Raney Cravath, an illuminating engineer, arrived in San Francisco in 1915 to assist with the indirect lighting of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. His was the task of producing new and beautiful color effects through the medium of lights.

Ruth was born in Chicago, January 23, 1902, the younger of the two Cravath children. Her brother is now a physicist in Pennsylvania.

Music contributed to the culture of the Cravath home. The father played the flute; and the mother the violin and the cello. While neither of her parents was an artist, both were pleased when their small daughter showed talent in modeling with clay and when, at the age of ten, she expressed a wish to become an artist or sculptor, her parents arranged for lessons in simple drawing.

There were no other artists in her family unless one considered the amateur art work of her grandmother and that of one of her aunts, who did watercolors of the pretty type permitted Victorian young ladies.

EARLY SCHOOLING

Ruth attended public schools in Chicago and before graduation from High School enrolled as a summer session student at the Art Institute in Chicago. Here she received instruction in sculpture from Miss Ida Stout. After graduation from High School she attended college at Grinnell, Iowa, for one year, where she selected a course in Liberal Arts. Afterwards she returned to Chicago and attended classes in drawing and design.

In the meantime her parents had moved to California and in 1921 she followed. Upon arrival she enrolled at the California School of Fine Arts where she studied for the next three years. The fourth year she attended half-day sessions and night classes. Each year at school she received either

an Honorable Mention or an award for her work. Her teachers were Beniamino Bufano and Ralph Stackpole, noted Western sculptors. It was Stackpole who taught Miss Cravath the "cut direct" method, as preferable to casting for some types of "in the round" sculpture.

She entered the 46th Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association, given November 24 to December 31, 1922, showing a work in plaster entitled, "Figure Study." The art column of the San Francisco Chronicle, May 24, 1925, announced:

> "....in the sculptor classes, day and night the two first prizes went to Maxine Albro and Ruth Cravath."

INSTRUCTORSHIP

In 1926 Ruth Cravath's ability was so soundly established that she was invited to conduct sculpture classes in the new building of the California School of Fine Arts, at Chestnut and Jones Streets, San Francisco. Here she became a pace-setter for young students later to become well-known in all manner of sculpture, from small coin designs to heroic monuments, from bas-reliefs to portrait busts. Among her students at that time were Jacques Schnier and Raymond Puccinelli. She also kept a studio on Montgomery Street, in the artist quarter, for fulfilling her own professional commissions.

In the spring of 1926 her work was effectively

presented with the San Francisco Society of Women Artists exhibit in the Don Lee show rooms, on Van Ness Avenue. The San Francisco Wasp, of May 1, 1926, comments on her work, and also mentions that she served on the jury of selection.

Aline Kistler, the critic, in the June 1926 issue of the Overland Magazine, writes:

> "Ruth Cravath's sandstone studies are appealing, dividing interest with the statues by Enid Foster, Adaline Kent and Rosalie Maus."

SUMMER ART SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN

In the summer of 1926 Ruth Cravath and Marian Trace opened a San Francisco Summer Art School for Children, based on the progressive methods of Professor Cizek* which allowed each child, in his own way, to paint or to model his subject matter with the utmost freedom of expression, unhampered by adult art dogmas. The classes opened June 20, 1926, and five mornings a week the children met for three hours of instruction. The local press gave liberal space to the results of this experiment.

By the end of July, Grace Hubbard reported in the Wasp that a complete Noah's Ark and a circus menagerie were exhibited by very young pupils at the Paul Elder Gallery. This was in connection with the exhibit by older students who had been at work since December.

*Eminent Viennese child psychologist and educator; founder of "Creative Art Classes" for children; exhibited children's art work in San Francisco, 1924.

While the pupils simply modeled from animals seen in the park or on the farm, or perhaps remembered from the last circus, their work was surprisingly true. Best of all, appreciation for art developed in them in the most natural way; the children not only learning form and proportion but having the time of their lives in the process. The teachers stated that "our idea is not to burden them with do's and don'ts, but to develop their own ideas, giving them technical aid when they want it. We do not want them to imitate adult work, but to originate and to carry out their own conceptions." The results were so gratifying that the two young art teachers decided to continue children's classes throughout the winter.

EXHIBITIONS

However, Miss Cravath did not devote all of her time to teaching. She was hard at work and in November showed some of her sculpture in a group exhibition with nine other advanced and somewhat rebellious young artists at the Modern Gallery, 718 Montgomery Street. These revolutionaries were the nucleus of a group that enlivened conservative art trends and added excitement to both exhibitions and art critics' columns.

The San Francisco Society of Women Artists gave their 1927 Annual Exhibit in March again at the Don Lee building. Miss Cravath's work was popular with the art lovers. In April the Forty-ninth Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco

Art Association brought her warm praise. The Argus of April 4, 1927, reported:

> "In sculpture the recipients of the medal of first award were Gottardo Piazzoni and Ruth Cravath. The latter, who is a very young woman, shows a talent far above the average and her work is quite a credit to the local womanhood."

Ruth Cravath won the award for a "Head" cut direct in sandstone.

From the Argonaut of April 16, 1927, comes this excerpt commenting on another exhibition:

> "....The nineteen members of the Modern Gallery are holding their second group exhibition, April 4 to 16. Entered is....a line drawing and a pastel by Ruth Cravath."

With her unlimited energy, Ruth Cravath and Julius Pommer presented new work at the Modern Gallery a short time later. The Argus of May 1927, again praises her as Jehanne Bietry Salinger writes:

> "Ruth Cravath has a delightful feminine freshness which expresses itself at the Modern Gallery in her best in sculpture and in her portraits.
>
> "Her 'Madonna and Child' which is a cut direct is an inspiring work. It shows that Miss Cravath has good schooling and that she is able as well to make stone radiate with her fine enthusiasm. 'The Rock and Waves' although imbued with romanticism and sentimentality does honor to the technique of the sculptor."

A criticism by Junius Cravens is in the Argonaut of April 30, 1927:

> "In two pastels, 'Shacks' and 'Cabin, Port Gamble,' Miss Cravath has been intrigued by the

monotony of identically repeated roof-forms, a pattern that would have lent her drawings unusual interest, had she considered her coloring more carefully. Her work also includes many mediums. 'Telegraph Hill,' an outlined water color, is her most successful attempt at the use of color. The oil portrait 'Darr' is fair. There is a charcoal drawing from the nude that has the charm of a certain lithe solidity. Her exhibition also includes a few examples of direct cut sandstone sculpture. 'Head' which was awarded a medal at the recent Annual Exhibition, occupies the place of honor at this exhibition. Her most interesting piece of sculpture, however, is 'The Rock and the Waves,' a group of two nude figures done in red stone. This is the best example of Miss Ruth Cravath's sculpture that we have seen. 'Madonna and Child' is undeniably interesting, but, in rendering it, she goes too far out of her way to make it primitive."

In the Monitor of April 30, 1927, Howard Putzel writes of the same exhibit:

"Among Ruth Cravath's sculptural pieces is included the head which received a medal of first award in the exhibition recently held by the San Francisco Art Association. The work is beautifully proportioned and has a direct simplicity which cannot fail to grow on one.

"Among striking conception is the 'Madonna and Child,' also fashioned in red sand stone. This is more arresting than the head, giving a sense of immensity, but it would be difficult to decide which of the two achieves purer beauty of form.

"A figure cut direct from a flat piece of limestone effects an odd fusion of bas-relief with rounded mass organization.

"'The Rock and the Wave' is a trifle too obvious, although it has undeniable power of movement. Viewed alongside of her sculpture, Miss Cravath's paintings are disappointing. The portraits have a rather tiresome sameness. A forest picture embodying much of the Cezanne geometrical formula is marred by over accentuation of a shadow in the foreground.

> "The figure drawings seem of exceptional merit, and so do most of the pastels. These last are similar to the pastels of Julius Pommer, although the latter manages his effects with greater facility."

YOUNG SCULPTORS

Her next appearance as an exhibitor occurred in September of the same year. The East-West Gallery held its second exhibition of works by a group of younger San Francisco sculptors.

Grace Hubbard, in the Wasp of September 10, 1927, writes:

> "Their work has received the highest commendation of such men as Edgar Walter, well-known sculptor, and Lee Randolph of the California School of Fine Arts, and it has been chosen because of its distinctive artistic merits and the unusual talent of the individuals comprising this group."

H. L. Dungan comments about this show in the Oakland Tribune of September 25, 1927:

> "Six artists, all of the younger generation, are exhibiting about fifty works of art at the East-West Gallery, Western Women's Club Building.
>
> "Five of the artists are in that rugged and uncertain school which may be called the modern primitive. The school is uncertain because its products, by the very ruggedness, are apt to be merely crude, instead of artistically crude.
>
> "....Ruth Cravath's sandstone reliefs are always interesting and generally well done. She exhibits a new carving of a baby playing with its foot....a naive bit of the modern primitive stuff that can be so very bad or so very good. Happily this leans toward the good, as do the other works she is showing."

Jehanne Bietry Salinger, art critic of the Examiner, says on September 25, 1927:

> "....Ruth Cravath, the most skillful sculptor of the whole group, cuts stone direct and achieves spontaneity of expression and harmony of line, as well as well-balanced composition."

The October 1927 issue of the Argus continues in the same vein:

> "Most skillful and brilliant work was exhibited by Miss Ruth Cravath, who seems quite at ease with the hardest of stone and achieves a pure rhythm of forms and lines."

With the beginning of the year 1928, Ruth Cravath was still teaching night classes at the California School of Fine Arts and day classes in sculpture at her own studio.

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

This year marked her entrance into the second period of her career. Early in March she was married to Sam Bell Wakefield III, son of Dr. and Mrs. Sam Bell Wakefield II, prominent in San Francisco and Bay Region society. A graduate of the University of California and subsequently of Princeton, her husband was then, as now, associated with a San Francisco banking house.

The bride's attendants were Marian Trace, co-founder of the Summer Art School for Children, and Dorothy Wagner (later the wife of Raymond Puccinelli, sculptor and former student of Cravath's), herself an artist best known for her mural paintings.

Dorothy Wagner and Ruth Cravath had become acquainted at the time they were designing costumes and scenery for the Children's Theatre, under the direction of Mrs. John Cuddy during several productive years.

In May 1928, at the San Francisco Art Association Show, honorable mention was given to Ruth Cravath. Writing about another exhibition at the East-West Gallery, Grace Hubbard in the Wasp of May 12, 1928, said:

> "The work exhibited represents artists of the younger group who have made a reputation for their protest against academic methods. They include....Ruth Cravath."

The Examiner of May 13, 1928 briefly mentioned the exhibit and called attention to Cravath in the following:

> "Among the exhibitors is....Ruth Cravath of the faculty of the California School of Fine Arts, whose work in sculpture has won several awards."

After her marriage, Ruth Cravath continued to teach sculpture at the California School of Fine Arts; night classes and some day classes. In September 1928, the San Francisco Society of Women Artists held their first meeting at the Women's City Club, a feature of which was the exhibit of work by the Ruth Cravath and Marian Trace art classes for children. As a result of this exhibit, the Society planned a junior department for children with artistic talents. In November the San Francisco Society of Women Artists held an exhibition at the Emporium Galleries. Among the winners of honors in sculpture, was Cravath.

On Tuesday, December 11, 1928, Ruth Cravath became the mother of twins, a boy, Sam Bell Wakefield IV, and a girl, Elizabeth. This was recorded in the Art News, California School of Fine Arts bulletin for December 1928.

DECORATIVE ARTS EXHIBITION

In the latter part of February 1929, Ruth Cravath was engaged in preparing the second Decorative Arts Exhibition, shown in the auditorium of the Women's City Club and organized and sponsored by the San Francisco Women Artists and the Women's City Club. This show struck an unprecedented note of modernity in the use of unusual textures and materials and Ruth Cravath was in charge of securing work in the various media.

During this time she worked on a bird bath for a garden setting, and also spent three months designing and executing a fountain in direct cut marble for the Emanuel Sisterhood, at Page and Laguna Streets in San Francisco.

IMPORTANT COMMISSIONS

By January 24, 1931, the Wasp, reporting progress in the decoration of the San Francisco Stock Exchange, mentioned that Ruth Cravath was among local artists hired as a group by the architect, Timothy Pflueger, not at salaries commensurate with their recognition but to work as a group at nominal, craftsmen's wages. Her particular designs were for three panels in the Stock Exchange Lunch Club. Two, placed on the eleventh floor, were called "Laborers" and

represented a working-man and a working-woman, done with dignity and a fine sense of space division. The other panel, called "Bar Maid," harmonized well with the architectural features of the tenth floor.

COMMISSIONS AND ART JURY SERVICE

In 1931 Ruth Cravath's work was directed both by her own urge of expression and by her many patrons. She exhibited at the Fifty-third Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association, in May 1931. Her two works, "Mother and Child" and "Portrait of R. N. C." were excellent but ineligible for honors that year as she served on the hanging jury and the jury of awards.

The Wasp of October 24, 1931, reports an interesting private commission by Ruth Cravath:

> "Garden sculpture by members of the Art Center of San Francisco is on exhibition in one of the garden courts of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. Among the artists represented in the showing of garden pieces was Ruth Cravath, creator of the memorial to Mrs. Lee Randolph at the Junior League House, and winner of the Art Association first prize in sculpture in 1928."

The story of Ruth Cravath's memorial to Mrs. Randolph, now at the Junior League's "Pine Haven," a children's home, is interesting. Mrs. Hopper Beatty, of Palo Alto, commissioned Cravath to execute this memorial to be placed in the garden of the Children's Convalescent Home at Palo Alto. Cravath designed the group--a little girl and a

tiny boy, standing back to back. The little girl's hand was arranged to hold grain for the birds. The figures were cut in tufa stone, a California stone which is pink with a fine grain and beautiful incrustations of varied color. But although a genuine spirit of childhood prevades the work the statue was rejected, later to be enthusiastically accepted by the Junior League in San Francisco.

PORTRAIT BAS-RELIEF AND HEADS

A red sandstone "Head of a Girl," exhibited publicly led to several portrait orders for Ruth Cravath. Before the end of the year she had also completed a bas-relief portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Colby. This was used as a panel over the fireplace in the living room of their home in Piedmont, California, a suburb of Oakland.

Again, sculpture was exhibited at the Art Center in March, 1932, and she contributed recent works.

An interesting piece by Cravath was noted at the Fifty-fourth Annual Exhibition of the Art Association. This was a portrait head, done in the direct cut method in marble, of Spencer Macky, artist director and teacher at the California School of Fine Arts. Albert Bender, art patron of San Francisco, now gave her a commission to do a portrait bust of Raphael Weill, the pioneer San Francisco merchant, which was placed in the Recreation Home on Pacific Avenue.

These portrait commissions led to many more portraits by Ruth Cravath. The local papers were filled with

comment on her thirteen portraits in sculpture when she exhibited at the Art Center. Anna Sommer reports in the San Francisco News for January 7, 1933:

> "Modern portraits in marble and stone, clothed with the classicism of a Grecian frieze, are Ruth Cravath's latest contribution to sculpture. She has long been acclaimed for her charming fountain figures, garden pieces and busts. Naturally interested in portraiture.... She believes that women, with their proclivity for the personal, are especially adapted for portraiture....She experimented with profiles on bas relief.
>
> "So distinctive and beautiful were these pronounced to be that she was impelled to carve a series for her first one-man show here in several years. A quadruplet in red sandstone of the sculptress herself, her husband and her twins Beth and Sam Bell IV., is done with fine simplicity and harmony.
>
> "'My idea is to do things like this for mantelpieces' remarked Miss Cravath. 'The single reliefs could be fitted into wall surfaces as part of the architecture.'
>
> "Unlike most plaques, Miss Cravath's are square, to allow more facile fitting in wall spaces. A carved portrait of Helen Forbes, the artist, might be a profile of one of the Caryatides, without forfeiting any of the likeness. To imprison likeness in stylized form, to render the person sufficiently impersonal to be decorative per se--this is the artist's aim.
>
> "A terra cotta plaque of a Raphaelic infant which she calls 'Baby' is suggestive of Miss Cravath's garden pieces, in which she emphasizes weight, volume and other essentials of stone."

Additional details of the show are found in the San Francisco Call of January 7, 1933:

> "....Included are portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Sam B. Wakefield II and ....a bronze of a lad,

> Walter Newman, the previously mentioned head cut direct in marble of Spencer Macky....and a terra-cotta of a year-old child, Ed Caine."

Reviewing the show in the Argonaut of January 13, 1933, Junius Cravens reported:

> "....Ruth Cravath's show impresses us as comprising the most vigorous and significant of the January exhibitions which have opened at the time of this writing. Her works, both in bas-relief and in the round, are directly cut in stone and have a rugged, almost masculine strength which is often lacking in the machine-cut pantographed sculpture that one too commonly sees.

But H. L. Dungan, in the Oakland Tribune of January 22, 1933, prefers:

> "....the old stone cat that had weathered several stormy days in some one's yard. The cat is lying placidly, its tail curled about it. The stone is roughly carved and the rainy days have started thin green moss to grow on it....
>
> "Ruth Cravath....is at her best in art when she allows her fancy free reign. When she confines herself to portrait busts and portrait reliefs she loses much of the spirit and dash found in her sculptures made when unhampered by the idea of a 'sitter.'"

In the Argonaut of February 10, 1933, Cravens wrote:

> "A definite style or 'school' of sculpture has been gradually developing in San Francisco during the last several years. It has resulted largely from the unswerving adherence to honest sculptural principles by such young artists as Ralph Stackpole, Ruth Cravath and Jacques Schnier (her pupil) and is further developed by a still younger group."

The Christian Science Monitor of February 10, 1933, writes:

> "They (Miss Cravath's sculptures) are done with a simplicity and directness and a feeling of fitness in medium."

At an "Artists' Barter Show" held at Courvoisier's Gallery in February 1933, Miss Cravath entered some of her work. In March, at the de Young Museum, Golden Gate Park, photographs of her garden sculpture were exhibited. At the same time she again showed her marble "Mother and Child," at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. In April, when the Art Center showed work by members, she exhibited three unusual pieces.

Among her 1933 portrait commissions was an over-mantel bas-relief for Mrs. Morse Erskine of her two children and their dog which Ruth Cravath carved directly into the fireplace stone.

A sculpture by Ruth Cravath, winning the member's prize, appeared in 1934, when the San Francisco Society of Women Artists held their annual exhibition at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor during November. Junius Cravens reported in the San Francisco News of November 24, 1934:

> "Ruth Cravath's finely modeled sculpture, a male torso, which was directly cut in stone ....could not have been more fittingly awarded the member's prize."

However, H. L. Dungan, in the Oakland Tribune of December 2, 1934, did not agree:

> "'Torso,' a stone carving of a flat-chested youth, with some otherwise interesting modeling; a good work, but it seems to me I have seen better sculpture by the artist."

During these years, Ruth Cravath conducted sculpture classes in the Sarah Dix Hamlin School for Girls, San Francisco, receiving abundant praise for their exhibitions.

WALL FOUNTAINS AND SUN-DIALS

In May, 1935, Miss Cravath and Mrs. Cabot Brown joined forces for an exhibit at the Art Center. Miss Cravath furnished out-of-door pieces for garden settings and Mrs. Brown arranged plants to suggest horticultural background designs. Mrs. Brown also showed a simple, semi-formal, back-yard garden in miniature, in which she used small models of four of Miss Cravath's garden sculptures.

Junius Cravens in the San Francisco News of May 11, 1935, had this to say:

> "There is a ruggedness and simplicity inherent in Miss Cravath's sculpture which lends itself peculiarly well to the out-of-doors. The most impressive of Miss Cravath's new works is a mother and child group which she has cut direct in white marble and left unpolished. Besides are some new portrait heads, bas-relief for wall fountains and a sun-dial."

Some of this decorative architectural and garden sculpture was in stone and some of it in terra-cotta. In the Argonaut of May 17, 1935, Glenn Wessels called attention to the fundamental soundness of her work:

> "Miss Cravath evidently subscribed to Michelangelo's dictum that a good piece of sculpture should be so closely knit in design, that it could roll down a hill without breaking off pieces. Her work all shows decent respect for the block form."

Late in the summer of 1935 at the San Francisco Museum of Art, sculpture was the center of interest, for Ralph Stackpole, Ruth Cravath and Adaline Kent held a group show, their work ranging from "conservatism to a diversity of modern styles." (The San Francisco Examiner, August 18, 1935).

Glenn Wessels, in his regular art column in the Argonaut of August 23, 1935, briefly commented on local trends in sculpture:

> "Ruth Cravath, the Howards, Jacques Schnier have all made their bow to cubist notions."

In 1936 Albert Bender purchased the Cravath head of "Spencer Macky" for the Bender Permanent Collection at the San Francisco Museum of Art.

The Argonaut of January 31, 1936, reports other activities of Ruth Cravath:

> "The first month of the year (1936) saw a successful show at the San Francisco Museum of Art when the Fifty-sixth Annual of the San Francisco Art Association opened its doors. Ruth Cravath and Adaline Kent acted as selecting judges of sculpture."

MORE BAS-RELIEFS

In May Ruth Cravath was represented at the Oakland Art Gallery by a stone relief, "Portrait of Twins." In June, she was present at the unveiling of a relief which her sculpture class at the Sarah Dix Hamlin School had carved on the west wall of their garden. The subject was athletic activities

of the older girls of the school, and the large carving (7½' x 9½') was done directly on the concrete wall.

To the Art Library of Los Angeles, she sent an exhibition of bas-reliefs.

When the State Fair at Sacramento opened its doors in the early autumn her work appeared in the Art section. Drawings were sent to Seattle to be exhibited at the Art Gallery there. And, as usual, she was represented at the San Francisco Society of Women Artists' annual show.

In June, 1937, she exhibited in the second Sculpture Exhibition held in the Oakland Art Gallery. Her works were a "Head" in black marble and a portrait bas-relief carving of a "Father, Mother and Young Child," a commission planned for a specific space in a residence.

Her classes in sculpture in the Sarah Dix Hamlin School completed another panel for their garden, a companion piece to the panel made by her sculpture class the preceding year. The formal unveiling revealed the subject as "Small Girls at Sports."

FAMILY

The Wakefield's twins, even at the age of eight years, have shown distinctive ability in graphic and sculptural arts. They have received the full benefit of their mother's experience in teaching children and with the facilities of her Russian Hill studio at hand, have given full

expression to their creative ability. Beth Wakefield has done a linoleum cut "Self-portrait" which shows amazing self-understanding. Vacation days and afternoons after school find the Wakefield studio filled with the twins' schoolmates, all interested in modeling or drawing.

Ruth Cravath's husband, Sam Bell Wakefield III, has joined in his artistic family's activities and taken up modeling as an avocation. One of his efforts, a life-size poured concrete nude figure of a woman called "Unafraid" was awarded a prize at the 1937 Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association.

THE ARTIST TODAY

Today, Ruth Cravath conducts classes in sculpture, exhibits frequently, and usually has a portrait commission in process. Her skill as a direct cut sculptor, one who carves and chisels without mechanical aids, continues to develop.

In August 1937 she received a signal honor, being appointed to the board of the Art Commission of San Francisco. The San Francisco Chronicle of August 21, 1937, writes:

> "One of San Francisco's foremost women sculptors yesterday was appointed by Mayor Rossi to the Art Commission to succeed Edgar Walter, who resigned from the Board last April because of ill health.
>
> "An exponent of modern art, Mrs. Wakefield, or Miss Cravath, as she prefers to be known professionally, is delighted at the opportunity of serving her city as a commissioner as well as in the capacity of sculptor.

"'I was surprised at the appointment,' she said, 'but I'm glad that my name was proposed by so many different groups.'

"When questioned about Beniamino Bufano's controversial statue of St. Francis, which is believed to have precipitated Walter's resignation from the board, Mrs. Wakefield smiled broadly.

"'I knew that question was bound to come up,' she said. 'But since you must know--I think Buffano is not only a good artist, but a genius. Therefore had I been on the board at the time I should have voted to accept the St. Francis statue. But I'm still not certain where it should be placed. I think that's a question that should be given deep consideration.'

"San Francisco's new woman commissioner is exceedingly shy and views her various attainments with an astonishing modesty."

She has been commissioned to do three large figures for the Golden Gate International Exposition, the pieces to be placed in the north court designed by Timothy Pfleuger, San Francisco architect.

This is Ruth Cravath of 1937, one of the leading contemporary women artists' in California, a capable teacher, sought after as an art jurist, a member of the art commission at thirty-five, and a woman whose life and art are a direct expression of her time.

RUTH CRAVATH

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

SCULPTURE:

Fountain in Tennessee Marble, 1929
Emanu-El Sisterhood, San Francisco, California
"Bar Maid"--"Laborers", 1930
Stock Exchange Lunch Club, San Francisco, California
Raphael Weil Memorial Tablet
Recreation House, Pacific Avenue, San Francisco, California, purchased by Albert Bender, 1932
Portrait--Walter Newman (Bronze), 1933
Athletic Award Tablet
Tamaplais School, San Rafael, California
"William Award" (Bronze Tablet)
Tamalpais School, San Rafael, California
Group of two Children with Bird-Bath
Junior League House, "Pinehaven," San Francisco, California
Madonna and Child (Red Sandstone)
The Rock and the Waves (Red Sandstone)
Mother and Infant (White Marble)
Head of Spencer Macky (Marble)
Portrait of Twins
Torso (Stone)
Old Stone Cat
Head of Girl (Red Sandstone)
A Quadruplet (Sandstone)
Study in Sandstone
Baby (Terra-Cotta)
Figure Study (Plaster)
Marian (Plaster)
Woman with Bundles (Plaster)

PASTELS:

Shacks
Cabins, Port Gamble

Darr (Oil)
Telegraph Hill (Watercolor)

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS:

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Colby, Berkeley, California
Portraits (Limestone Bas-relief)
Mrs. Lawrence Myers, San Francisco, California
Portrait--Jean Myers (Terra-cotta)
Mrs. Eugene Mahon, San Francisco, California
Small Group of Three Children
Mr. and Mrs. Morse Erskine, San Anselmo, California
Portrait--Children and Dog (carved over fireplace)
Mr. Trosper, Cazadero, California
Portrait of Mr. Trosper (Bronze)
Mrs. Murray Johnson, Piedmont, California
Garden Figure (Cement)
Mrs. Thiel, Piedmont, California
Bas-Relief (Colored Marble)
Bas-Relief (Terra-Cotta)
Mrs. R. G. Parker, Alameda, California
Portrait--Joan (Sandstone)
Colonel C.E.S. Wood, Los Gatos, California
Child Drinking (Limestone Bas-Relief)
Mr. and Mrs. Perry Reicher, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Portrait (Marble)

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, California
Spencer Macky (Portrait in Marble), Gift of
Albert Bender, 1935
Junior League House--"Pinehaven," San Francisco,
California
Group of Two Children with Bird-Bath
Recreation House, Pacific Avenue, San Francisco,
California
Raphael Weil Memorial Tablet
Stock Exchange Lunch Club, San Francisco, California
"Bar Maid" (Bas-Relief)
"Laborers" (Bas-Relief)
Emanu-El Sisterhood, San Francisco, California
Fountain in Tennessee Marble
Tamalpais School, San Rafael, California
"William Award" (Bronze Tablet)

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California
- San Francisco Art Association
  - Figure Study (Plaster) 1922
  - Marian (Plaster) 1924
  - Woman with Bundles (Plaster) 1924
  - Head (Sandstone) 1927
  - Madonna and Child (Sculpture) 1928
  - Portrait 1928
  - Mother and Child (Sculpture) 1931
  - Portrait of R. N. C. 1931
  - Spencer Macky (Marble) 1932
- San Francisco Society of Women Artists
  - Study in Sandstone 1926
  - Representative Works 1927
  - Prize Winning Work of Sculpture 1928
  - Head of Spencer Macky 1932
  - Torso (Stone) 1934
  - Representative Works 1936
- East West Gallery of Fine Arts
  - Baby 1927
  - The Rock and the Waves 1927
  - Drawings 1928
- Young Artists' Group 1926
- Members of Modern Gallery 1927
  - Madonna and Child (Sculpture)
  - Line Drawings and Pastels
- Joint Exhibition--Ruth Cravath and Julius Pommer 1927
  - Shacks (Pastel)
  - Cabins, Port Gamble (Pastel)
  - Telegraph Hill (Watercolor)
  - Darr (Oil)
  - Nude (Charcoal)
  - Head (Sandstone Sculpture)
  - Rock and the Waves
  - Madonna and Child
- Garden Sculpture Exhibition by Members of Art Center 1931
  - Head of Girl (Red Sandstone)
- Sculpture Exhibition, Art Center March 1932
- Portraits in Sculpture Exhibition, Art Center 1933
  - Spencer Macky (Marble)
  - A Quadruplet (Red Sandstone)

Helen Forbes
Baby (Terra-cotta)
Dr. and Mrs. Wakefield II
Walter Newman
Old Stone Cat

Artists' Barter Show, Courvoisier Gallery
Sculptures 1933

De Young Memorial Museum
Photographs of her Garden Sculpture March 1933

California Palace of the Legion of Honor
Mother and Child (Marble) 1933

Art Center
Mother and Child April 1933

Art Center--Joint Exhibition with Mrs. Cabot Brown
Sculpture for Garden Settings (Terra-cotta and direct cut stone)
Mother and Child Group (White Marble)
Portrait Heads (Sun Dial)
Bas-relief for Wall Fountains

Group Exhibition, Ruth Cravath, Ralph Stackpole, Adaline Kent August 1935

San Francisco Museum of Art
Architectural Garden Exhibit 1937

Oakland, California
Oakland Art Gallery 1936
Portrait of Twins (Stone)
Second Sculpture Exhibition 1937
Head (Black Marble)
Portrait in Relief of Reiche Family

Sacramento, California
State Fair Art Section 1936

Los Angeles, California
Art Association Library 1936
Bas-relief

Seattle, Washington
Art Gallery
Drawings 1936

AWARDS:

San Francisco Art Association, San Francisco, California
First Award Medal divided with Gottardo Piazzoni for "Head (Sandstone) 1927
First Prize in Sculpture for "Madonna and Child" 1928

San Francisco Society of Women Artists, San Francisco, California
Award for Work in Sculpture 1928
First Award of $100 divided with Dorothy Duncan for "Torso" (Stone) 1934

CLUBS:

Member:
San Francisco Art Association
San Francisco Society of Women Artists
San Francisco Art Center
California School of Fine Arts
Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois

JURY SERVICE:

San Francisco Society of Women Artists
Jury of Selection April 1926
California Palace of the Legion of Honor
Jury of Selection for Seventh Annual Exhibition November 1932
Ninth Annual Exhibition, Jury of Fine Arts November 1935
San Francisco Art Association
Jury of Selection, hanging and awards for the 53rd Annual Exhibition April 1931
Jury of Selection for the 56th Annual Exhibition January 1936

RUTH CRAVATH

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May 11, 1935, p. 20--March 27, 1937, p. 8

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March 20, 1931--May 27, 1932
October 30, 1932--January 22, 1933
December 2, 1934--May 17, 1936

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November 3, 1932--January 5, 1933

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May 17, 1935, p. 20--August 23, 1935, p. 18
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